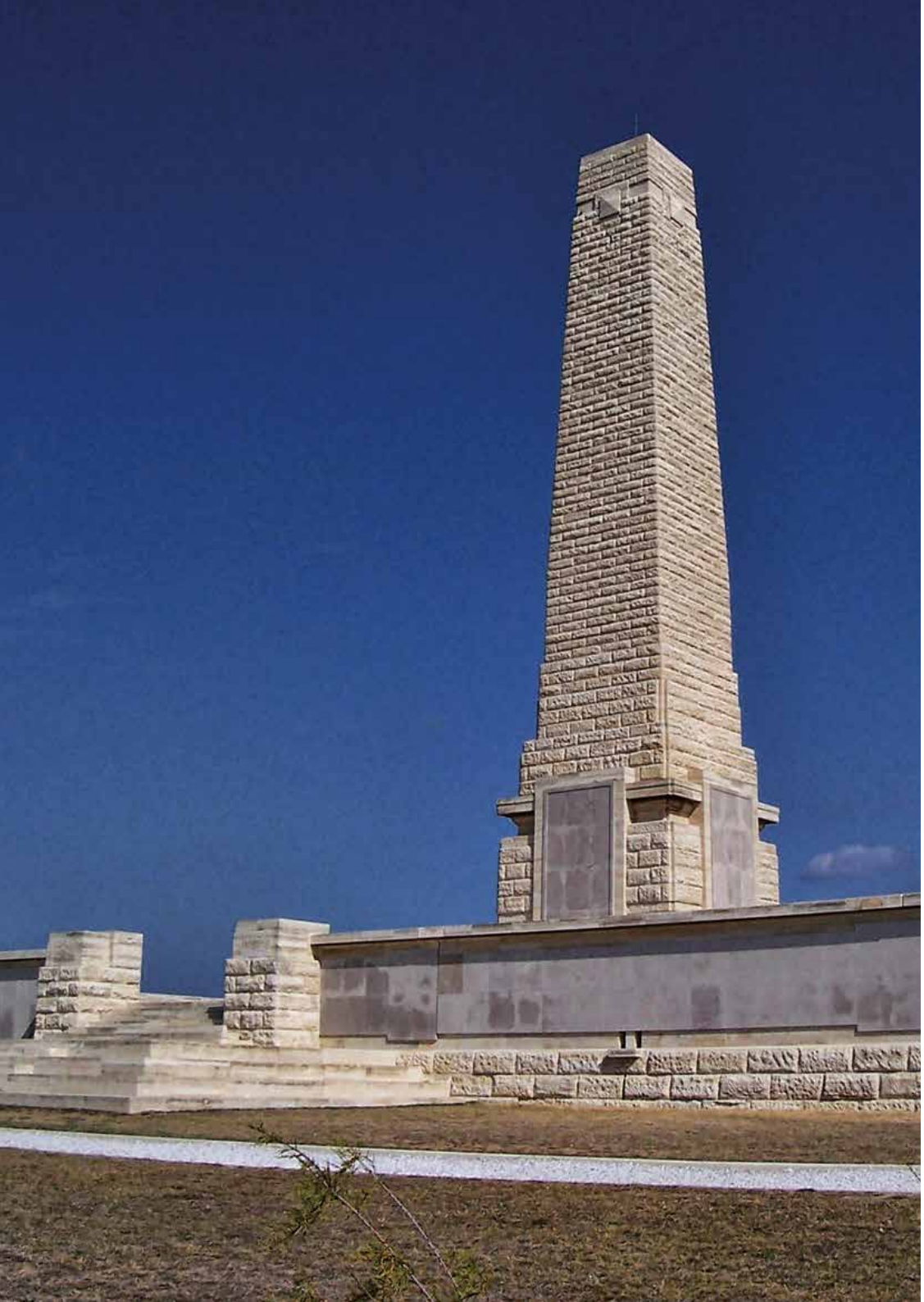
ARMY

The First World War Battlefield Guide:
Volume 2

The Forgotten Fronts

Edition 1
November 2016



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The British Army Campaign Guide to the Forgotten Fronts of the First World War

1st Edition November 2016

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The Cover Images

Front Cover: (1) Wounded soldier of the 10th Battalion, Black Watch being carried out of a communication trench on the 'Birdcage' Line near Salonika, February 1916 © IWM; **(2)** The advance through Palestine and the Battle of Megiddo: A sergeant directs orders whilst standing on one of the wooden saddles of the Camel Transport Corps © IWM **(3)** Soldiers of the Royal Army Service Corps outside a Field Ambulance Station. © IWM

Inside Front Cover: Helles Memorial, Gallipoli © Barbara Taylor

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Volume 2

The British Army Campaign Guide to the Forgotten Fronts of the First World War

2-pdr Vickers Pom-pom on a flatbed railway truck in Mesopotamia © RAHT

Edited by

Colonel John Wilson
Consulting Editor- **Colonel Michael Crawshaw**

1st Edition November 2016

Foreword

General Sir Nicholas Carter KCB CBE DSO ADC Gen
Chief of the General Staff

The Army has placed significant emphasis on the commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the First World War. There has been much attention on the Western Front and particularly the Battle of the Somme this year. However, we tend to forget that the War was a world war and this year represents the 100th anniversary of a number of very significant campaigns from 1916.

These include the British offensive in German East Africa, the defeat of the jihadist Ali Dinar in Darfur by an Anglo-Egyptian force, offensives by Anglo-French forces in Macedonia, the Brusilov offensive in Ukraine, the withdrawal from Gallipoli, the capitulation at Kut, five battles on the River Isonzo in North East Italy and closer to home the Easter uprising in Dublin.

This book seeks to bring to life these 'Forgotten Fronts' not least to enable us to place the Western Front in a broader context. These campaigns will resonate with those who have fought in our own recent campaigns. And there are some important lessons that chime with the current character of conflict.

The importance of agility, adaptability and constant learning; insight and understanding of language, culture and geography; the delegated and decentralised nature of grand strategy and the role of London in setting policy; the significance of allies; and of particular significance - the difficulty of realising successful outcomes without a clear political strategy on the ground.

I commend it to you.

Preface

Colonel John Wilson

The First World War was one of the greatest events in British history. The scale in time and distance, the reach, the cost in men, materiel and money, and the changes it wrought nationally and globally all show the greatness of it. Inevitably, the military history will show the British Army at its best and at its worst. The chapters in this book which describe and analyse the campaigns of the 'Forgotten Fronts' are merely an introduction to a part of that history.

The battles on the Western Front are well known and properly recorded, not least in the earlier companion volume to this one . The 'Forgotten Fronts' includes only one truly well known campaign - The Dardanelles, or Gallipoli. The fighting in the Middle East (except for T.E. Lawrence and the Arab Revolt), Africa, Asia and the Mediterranean is little known in the public mind. And that is one of the reasons for publishing this book. The book is primarily aimed at the British soldier. Although it is has been written largely without jargon there may be some terms or comments which will be better understood by soldiers than others.

The book goes beyond the Armistice of November 1918. The Armistice ended the fighting on the Western Front, yet conflict did not cease. British troops found themselves fighting in Russia, the Caucasus, on the Indian sub-Continent and Ireland. They undertook peace-keeping duties in the Balkans, Turkey and Northern and Eastern Europe. A British army occupied Germany and formed the first British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) and that unfamiliar story is told by Nick Weekes.

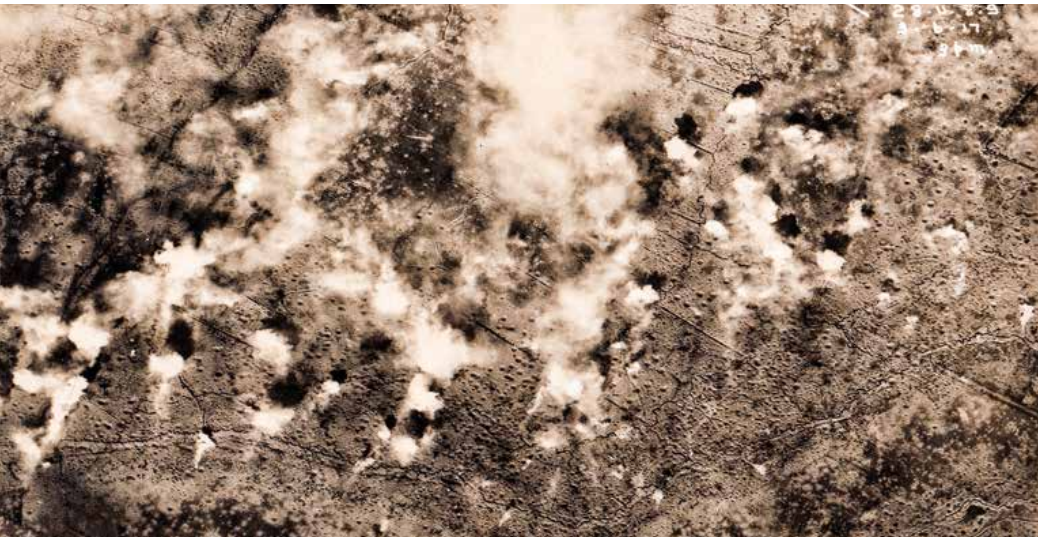
The post war action was sometimes bloody; Robert Johnson describes how in one action in Iraq on 24 July 1920 over one hundred British soldiers of the Manchester Regiment were killed. Those activities are recorded here. 1922 was chosen to mark the endpoint, because this was the first point since 1914 when the British Army returned to some sort of pre-war stance, as the timelines in the book show. As with the main campaigns of the war, the soldier-reader is given guidance on further reading.

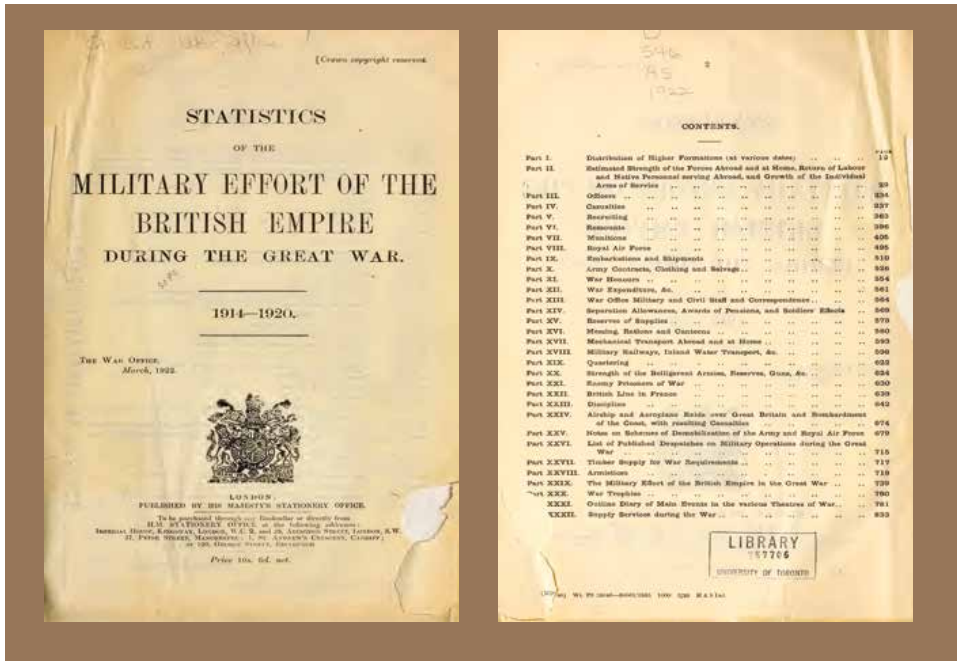
The book has not been issued merely to satisfy curiosity; indeed the intention is to provoke further curiosity and so to study war more deeply. There is much to learn from these campaigns which are closer to our modern experience than the great battles of the Western Front. The chapter on Lessons Learned by Richard Toomey goes to the heart of this aspect, but the soldier-reader will find much in all chapters to engage him/her.

The focus throughout is on the British Army. This does not mean that we think that only the British Army's efforts are worth recording; but rather that we have chosen to bring to the attention of modern British soldiers the activities of their predecessors. The sacrifice of Empire Forces, of our allies whether from France, Russia, Italy, Belgium, the USA or elsewhere was prodigious and awful; we seek no place in a hierarchy of grief and can only be eternally grateful for that sacrifice. There are separate chapters to record the efforts of our sister Services, in the air (Sebastian Cox) and on the sea (Eric Grove) in these faraway places.

The maps are all new and we are especially proud of the high standard achieved by the staff of the Defence Geographic Centre (Barbara Taylor and Martin Smithson) in drawing these maps which are so important in a work of military history. The book has been fully illustrated with images largely sourced from

0.1 Barrage prior to Messines 3 June 1917 (Papers of Major (DO) GB Wilson RGA)





0.2 Statistics from the Great War

the Imperial War Museum. Like the maps, the images provide an extra dimension - they bring the history to life. Photographs of a battlefield have a limited value; on the Western Front one frightful shell crater looks much like another.

There are few images of weapons; there are many images of men and some of women. And there are images to illustrate the size and complexity of the campaigns. Notice the orderly nature of the field hospital on the Gallipoli Peninsula, the sorting office at Murmansk, the field workshops and kitchens in Russia and Constantinople. Professional photographers from civilian life such as Ernest Brooks and the American Ariel Varges who were among the most distinguished official recorders of the time, served in these theatres and their images feature strongly in these pages.

Campaigns cannot be won without a massive investment in infrastructure. The combined administrative and logistic effort of the British Army in the First World War is perhaps the biggest sustained single enterprise ever undertaken by the nation, before or since. A battle might be over in a few days, campaigns are measured in months and years. Battles are likely to have but the one commander, a campaign may have several. The force level will probably decrease during a battle, in campaigns they tend to increase, perhaps many times. Once battle is joined the opportunity for politicians to interfere is small; not so in a campaign, for good or ill. Some modern soldiers think we invented campaign planning, but a study of these campaigns will show the need for a more nuanced interpretation.

The complexity of planning and executing the campaigns of over 100 years ago is all the more remarkable in the absence of our modern means of communications. The only information technology advantage the staff officer had in 1915 over Wellington's army in 1815 was the telegraph, a very primitive national only telephone service and the typewriter - strategic voice radio was a distant dream (nightmare) for commanders. Yet the compilation of data was phenomenal - see The Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914-1920 - available thanks to the University of Toronto - here: https://archive.org/details/statisticsofmili00grea.

Perhaps, the worst aspects of the Army can be seen in the conduct of the Gallipoli campaign (as described by Peter Hart). The main proponent of that campaign was Churchill. The idea of using a fleet to subjugate a people has a curious echo from before the war. During the Curragh incident in 1914 Churchill boasted (threatened?) that the Battle Squadron he had ordered to Belfast Lough 'would have the town in ruins in twenty four hours'. We know this because the Army Records Society's The Army and the Curragh Incident (Ian WF Beckett (Ed.)) gives us primary source documents in a fine edited form. And, soldier-readers can work out things for themselves from this sort of material. On the other hand, the withdrawal from the Gallipoli Peninsula was a superbly planned and executed operation.

0.3 2.75 inch Mountain gun at full recoil whilst in action in Salonika © RAHT

The appalling disease rates especially in Africa, Mesopotamia and Macedonia were gradually brought under control as Dr Michael Tyquin shows in his chapter. You can read how much better Allenby apparently did than Murray with his highly successful battles such as Megiddo (as analysed by John Peaty). Yet Murray fulfilled his primary mission of securing Egypt and the Canal, and laid the groundwork, the very effective infrastructure, for Allenby's later success. You will also read that Allenby paid tribute to Murray for that fine early work with far fewer resources - campaigns absorb men and materiel. Sometimes the resources may not justify the strategic value, of which Macedonia is an example (Alan Wakefield). And in some ways, so is the Mesopotamian campaign (Robert Johnson), which certainly went beyond its original rationale; which is why the solid 'Westerner', Robertson, as CIGS, was so determined to rein in the ambitions of some of these expeditions.

Of all the Forgotten Fronts none can be generally further from the collective national mind than operations in Africa. To an older generation only "The African Queen" is a vague recollection and then only for the roles of Katherine Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart. There were three widely separated theatres as described by Bob Evans. It was on the 12 August 1914 in Togoland that an African soldier, Regimental Sergeant Major Alhaji Grunshi of the West African Frontier Force, fired the first British rifle shot of the war whilst reconnoitring the route north towards Kamina (Hew Strachan - The First World War, OUP, 2001). And it was largely the African soldier and porter who fought and died in these African battles.

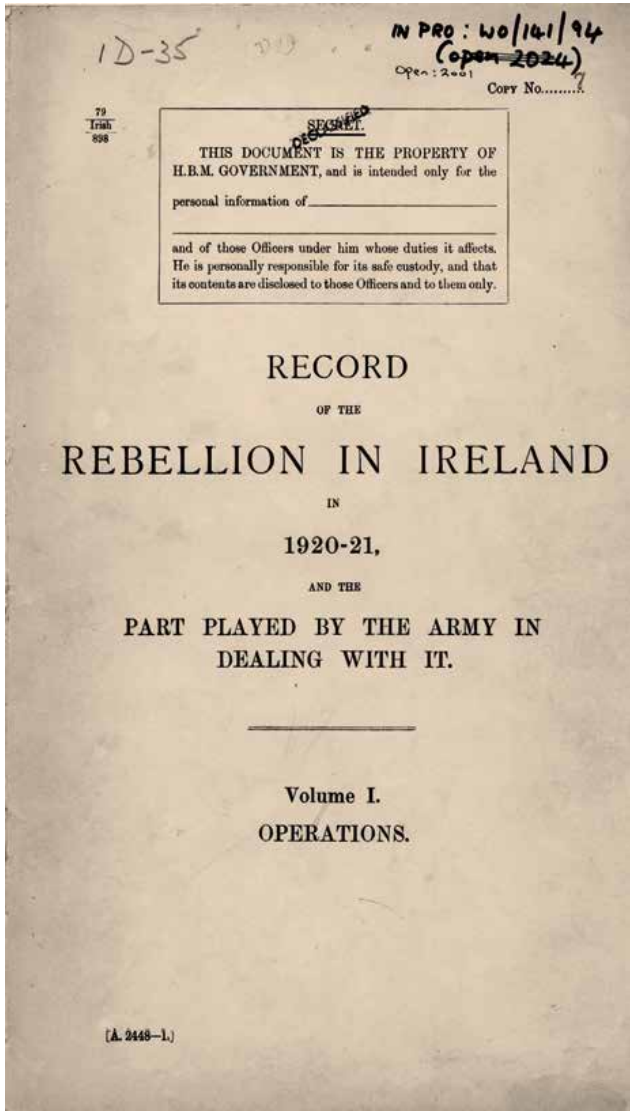
How these theatres were supplied is a remarkable tale in itself as Greg Kennedy shows because supply meant shipping. The part played by the British Army in Italy was minor in fighting terms but, as Paolo Capanni describes, it had a higher strategic purpose and value; it helped to keep Italy in the war.

In a book such as this, it is common practice to ask others to comment on the drafts. Their comments are not usually quoted in full. One reviewer is Michael Crawshaw formerly a distinguished editor of the British Army Review. His comments on Ireland are worth noting:

> ***'The 1916 Rising and the 1919-21 'Tan War' represent two totally different classes of violence. The first was an 1848-style insurrection but with modern weapons; ineptly conceived and executed, and only permitted to happen because of a like degree of ineptitude on the part of the authorities, it fully justifies the author's frequent use of 'incredible' in his account. In contrast, 1919-21 can legitimately be regarded as the first 'modern' insurgency. The emphasis on intelligence aspects by both sides, the targeting of command structure, the sophisticated use of the media flank by the insurgents, and the rapid switch from military action to negotiation when the former was seen by the IRA as unlikely to achieve results, all support this judgment.***
>
> ***It was a pity that the 'lessons learned' encapsulated in the Record of the Rebellion [Jeudwine, H., Record of the Rebellion in Ireland 1920-21, and the Part Played by the Army in Dealing with It, (two volumes), War Office, 1922] were not put to better use in subsequent counter-insurgency operations. The problem was that the Irish events were regarded as sui generis, and therefore inapplicable to situations in the wider Empire.'***

At the same time as the Army was fighting an insurgency in Ireland as analysed by Kevin Myers, so it was that the Army was involved in asymmetric warfare on the North West Frontier. The performance of the Territorial Force battalions and the other inexperienced units at that time was necessarily limited but as the authors, John Ross and Michael Crawshaw point out, it was 'good enough'. Along with 'knowing what you can do, and more importantly what you cannot do', 'good enough' is a vital military aphorism; it can also be called 'Economy of Force'.

0.4 Jeudwine Report Volume I - Operations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RECORD

OF THE

REBELLION IN IRELAND

IN

1920-21,

AND THE

PART PLAYED BY THE ARMY IN DEALING WITH IT.

Volume I.

OPERATIONS.

[A. 2448—1.)

The post-armistice operations are of special interest. We were peace-keeping in the Balkans more than seventy years before OPERATION GRAPPLE (starting in Bosnia 1993) as the the short essay in the Macedonia chapter explains. We had 20,000 soldiers in Constantinople in 1920 on peace-enforcement duties. Indeed in July that year, the 20th Hussars charged Turkish positions near the village of Gebze and successfully routed them; the last regimental cavalry charge by British Army. The first BAOR was tasked to provide military aid to the civil power in Schleswig-Holstein, Silesia and Danzig whilst four battalions from Germany returned temporarily to the UK on military aid to the civil power (MACP) tasks relating to industrial unrest.

There are occasional extracts in the book of the words of soldiers: Robertson, Haig and Wilson, expressing their opinions vigorously. The conflict between politicians and generals did not end with the war. Indeed, the vicious exchange between Churchill as Secretary of State and Wilson as CIGS over policy in Ireland in 1920 is especially illuminating.

Wilson as CIGS clashed with just about everybody and as later observers we are fortunate that he was wonderfully indiscreet in his letters as captured by Keith Jeffery's volume - The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson 1918-1922 - The Army Records Society. Once again, we are able to make up our own minds because we have the data. The tables of strengths for 1914 and for 1920, together with covering minutes by Churchill and Wilson are in the Appendices. The struggle to match resources to commitments is not new and not even post-Second War.

Today the nation is not strategically ambitious, and it is difficult to imagine now that our country chose to take on that most challenging of theatres - Russia - whilst still deeply engaged in the First War. Jonathon Riley shows the sweeping confidence with which Allied and British forces intervened in south and north Russia and the Caucasus, a region in which today there are too many countries to list here. But Persia (Iran) and Russia were deemed to be vital ground by the strategic planners in that Edwardian and Imperial era. The shift from fighting the First War to policing its aftermath is explained by William Philpott, and the higher control of the war is described by David French.

Key
British Empire.
British Protectorate.
Other theatres with Dominion/Empire troops.
Pursuit of SMS Goeben and SMS Breslau 1914.
Pursuit and sinking of SMS Emden 1914.
Please note: This map is approximate, for indicative purposes only. This is derived from a modern map and not all boundaries are correct as 1914-18 or necessarily as in the aftermath of the war. Not to scale.
Samoa
Coronel 1914
Falklands 1914
Togoland 1914 Cameroon 1914-1916
German SE Africa (Namibia) 1914-1915
Jutland 1916
Heligoland Bight 1914
Dogger Bank 1914
Easter Rising 1916
Western Front 1914-1918
Italy 1915-1918
Macedonia/ Salonika 1916-1918
Gallipoli (Dardanelles) 1915-1916
Mesopotamia/ Egypt/Palestine/ Arabia (Arab Revolt and Lawrence of Arabia) 1915-1918
East Africa 1914-1918 (including SMS Königsberg)
Tsingtao 1914 (with Japan)
Samoa 1914 (NZ troops only)
1
2

Map 0.1 British Theatres of War 1914-1918

The story of the soldiers who fought in the Great War is well known. Less well known is how they stopped being soldiers and how the state manned the Army after the Armistice. Charles Messenger explains how it was done, and with more forethought than you might have imagined. William Beveridge appears rather earlier in this nation's history than his more famous report.

The Timelines are a useful aid because they permit the reader to see what else was going on in the war at the same time. The exercise of studying and absorbing the timelines adds value to an appreciation of the First War. Knowledge of a given campaign is limited without that wider dimension.

To understand the significance of these campaigns requires a strategic overview. Professor Sir Hew Strachan gives that strategic context in his introductory chapter. His interpretation and analysis may well be new to many readers for it provides explanation that gives meaning to these campaigns. No longer should these campaigns be thought of as "side-shows", rather they should be seen as individual wars, in part serving a higher strategic purpose.

Further Reading

The chapters give guidance for further reading, but the following books are some personal recommendations:

Anthony Bruce, (2002), *The Last Crusade, The Palestine Campaign*: John Murray.

Max Caulfield, *Easter Rebellion*: Gill and Macmillan

Christopher Clark, (2012, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went To War In 1914*: Penguin.

Ruth Dudley Edwards, (2016), *The Seven - The Lives and Legacies of the Founders of the Irish Republic*: Oneworld.

Peter Hart, (2011), *Gallipoli*, London: Profile Books.

Peter Hart, (2000), *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork*, 1916-1923: OUP (USA).

Max Hastings, (2014), *Catastrophe - Europe Goes To War 1914*: William Collins.

Michael Howard, (2002), *The First World War*: OUP.

Irish Times, *Rebellion Handbook, 1916*, republished 1998.

John Keegan, (1998), *The First World War*: Hutchinson.

Margaret MacMillan, (2014), *The War that Ended Peace: How Europe abandoned peace for the First World War*: Profile.

Allan Mallinson, (2013), *1914: Fight the Good Fight: Britain, the Army and the Coming of the First World War*: Bantam Press.

My main impression from my work on this book is the image of the British soldier in these distant theatres. And they were distant, too, once in theatre there was virtually no opportunity to return to UK for leave. For officers, advancement might mean a move, but for an ordinary soldier only a serious wound would mean a return to Britain - a "Blighty One". The soldiers look tough, see the Battery photograph of Major EH Shepard's battery in Italy. The men look strong and burly. And see, too, the photograph of the two sergeants who "took" the surrender at Jerusalem; they look professional, capable and surprisingly modern. The officers were no softies either: you would not want to cross Brigadier General F.H. Cunliffe, Commander of the Nigerian Brigade.

I am grateful to the British Army for this opportunity to contribute to Operation REFLECT, the Army's overall name for this project to remember and reflect in a systematic way on the efforts of our soldier predecessors during the Great War.

Further Reading

Alan Moorehead, *Gallipoli*. London: Aurum Press.

Kevin Myers, (2014), *Ireland's Great War*: The Lilliput Press.

Colin Nicholson, (2001), *The Longman Companion To The First World War, Europe 1914-1918*: Longman.

Frank Richards DCM MM, *Old Soldier Sahib* and *Old Soldiers Never Die*: Faber and Faber.
The first book is the memoir of a private soldier in India and Burma before the First War, and the second is his memoir from the Western Front. Frank Richards was assisted in the writing by Robert Graves MC (Goodbye To All That) who served with him in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. Also in the same battalion was Siegfried Sassoon MC. Frank Richards' books are recommended for there are so few accounts of the life of a private soldier from before the First War or of the regular soldier of private rank during it.

FM Sir William Slim, (1959), *Unofficial History*: Cassell.

Norman Stone, (2008), *World War One: A Short History*: Penguin.

Hew Strachan, (2001), *The First World War, Volume 1: To Arms*: OUP.

Charles Townshend, (2005), *1916, The Irish Rebellion*: Penguin.

Michael Tyquin, (1993), Gallipoli: *The Medical War*: Sydney, University of New South Wales Press.

FM Viscount Wavell, (1946), *Allenby: Soldier and Statesman*: Harrap.

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Abbreviations used in Picture Credits

IWM	Imperial War Museum
NAM	National Army Museum
NPG	National Portrait Gallery
US LoC	US Library of Congress
CWM	Canadian War Museum
RAHT	Royal Artillery Historical Trust

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General Key for All Maps

Formation / Unit National Designators

Red	Enemy (Central Powers)
Blue	Allied
Light Blue	Co-belligerent
AAEF	Army of French Equatorial Africa
AFG	Afghan (enemy, but not member of Central Powers)
AFSR	Armed Forces of South Russia
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
AuH	Austro-Hungarian
BAOR	British Army of the Rhine
Bde	Brigade
BE	Belgian
BEAEF	British East Africa Expeditionary Force
BMM	British Military Mission
BR	British
BUL	Bulgarian
CEF	Cameroons Expeditionary Force
CAN	Canadian
Cau	Caucasian
Col	Colonial (French)
EEF	Egyption Expeditionary Force
ELOPE	Elope Force
Fd	Field
FR	French
GCE	German Caucasus Expedition
GE	German
GHQ	General Headquarters
GRC	Greek
H	Hungarian (Honved)
HQ	Headquarters
IAC	Islamic Army of the Caucasus (Turkish)
IEF	Indian Expeditionary Force
Ind	Indian
IT	Italian
MEF	Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force
MO	Moroccan
Mtd	Mounted
Mtn	Mountain
NREF	North Russian Expeditionary Force
NRFF	Nyasaland/Rhodesian Field Force
NRRF	North Russian Relief Force
NRTC	North Russian Transportation Corps
PO	Portuguese
RUS	Russian
SA	South African
SP	Spanish
SYREN	Syren Force
Tir Sen	Tirailleurs Senegalese (French)
TUR	Turkish
WAFF	West African Frontier Force
US	United States

British Empire Regiments

BW	Black Watch (Royal Highlanders)
Ches	Cheshire Regiment
Dorset	Dorsetshire Regiment
GCR	Gold Coast Regiment
Hants	Hampshire Regiment
HCB	Home Counties Brigade
HLcrs	Hariana Lancers
Hsrs	Hussars
IMAB	Indian Mountain Artillery Brigade
KO	King's Own (Royal Lancaster)
KSLI	King's Shropshire Light Infantry
Leic	Leicester Regiment
Norf	Norfolk Regiment
NR	Nigerian Regiment
NStaff	North Staffordshire Regiment
NTC	Northern Territories Constabulary
QVO	Queen Victoria's Own Light Cavalry
Middx	Middlesex Regiment
RF	Royal Fusiliers
RFA	Royal Field Artillery
RHA	Royal Horse Artillery
RMLI	Royal Marine Light Infantry
RWar	Royal Warwickshire Regiment
RWF	Royal Welch Fusiliers
SAMR	South African Mounted Rifles
SLancs	South Lancashire Regiment
SM	Sappers and Miners
SWB	South Wales Borderers
SWM	South Waziristan Militia
Welch	Welch Regiment
Worc	Worcestershire Regiment
WR	Wellesley's Rifles

XXXXX	Army Group	●●●	Platoon
XXXX	Army		Infantry
XXX	Corps		Cavalry / mounted
XX	Division		Tank / armoured
X	Brigade		Artillery
III	Regiment (BUL/FR/ GRC/IT/TU/RUS)		Engineers
II	Battalion or Regiment (BR only)		Transport
I	Company / Squadron		Signals

1.1 Horatio Herbert Kitchener, 1st Earl Kitchener of Khartoum, by Bassano © NPG

1. Introduction - The Strategic Context

Professor Sir Hew Strachan DL

In the history of the First World War, many of the campaigns described in this volume have been called 'sideshows' (and indeed are so dubbed by some of the book's contributors). The term is pejorative. It proceeds from the correct presumption that for Britain the most important front lay in France and Flanders. But did the centrality of one theatre for one belligerent make other fronts no more than distractions? Self-evidently for France itself the principal front was France, and yet the French - however much they too focused their attentions on the Western Front, both at the time and since - have never so consciously denigrated the other fronts on which they fought. Indeed they gave the Balkan and Ottoman theatres coherence by uniting them in a single command, l'Armée d'Orient, not least because when they withdrew their forces from Gallipoli at the end of 1915 they despatched them to Salonika.

In 1914 both Britain and France were empires possessed of colonies in Asia and Africa, the two continents abutting Europe. Their armies were agents of imperial control which now found themselves having to prioritise a war in Europe. The problem was one which France had anticipated, but one for which Britain was extraordinarily ill-prepared. The British army was optimised structurally and numerically for imperial defence, not for mass continental warfare against major European powers. When on 3 August 1914 the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, addressed the House of Commons on the situation in Europe, he maintained that the war which Britain would fight would be overwhelmingly naval, and anticipated that the role of the British Expeditionary Force would be to secure the colonies.

The Vulnerability of Empire

In fact the BEF was sent to France, as the general staff had actively planned at least since 1910. Those at home might have fretted about the defence of the home base as a result, but in practice the Royal Navy guaranteed its relative, if not its absolute, security. The areas of greatest vulnerability for the British empire as a result of the despatch of the BEF across the Channel lay across the southern arc of its rule - through Africa, across the Middle East and on to India. The BEF had been as much designed for imperial security as for European war, and its original destination was as likely to be India as France or Belgium. Now that it had crossed the Channel, Britain had little else in the tank. The Germans realised this from the outset of the war. If they could promote insurrection outside Europe, they would prevent their imperial opponents from concentrating their forces within it. Their alliances drew them south-east, that with Austria-Hungary to the Balkans, and that with the Ottoman empire encouraged them to aspire to reach to south Asia in the east and into sub-Saharan Africa in the south. The Ottoman call to holy war, Jihad, in November 1914 gave their hopes religious and revolutionary purchase. They supplemented them by encouraging the nationalist aspirations of colonised peoples. In 1915 battlefield success opened the supply routes to Asia and Africa. The successful defence of the Dardanelles guaranteed the Central Powers' control of the waterway which both separated Asia from Europe and determined Russia's access from the Black Sea to the wider world. In the autumn of 1915 Bulgaria threw in its lot with the Central Powers and Serbia was crushed. Now Germany had a secure land route to the straits, and the potential to shift troops and weapons not just to the Dardanelles but to Palestine and the Caucasus.

The Global Dimensions of the War

The British 'sideshows' of the First World War were therefore in origin London's attempt to close down the global dimensions of the war, not an effort to widen them. In the opening days of August the government authorised operations to capture German ports and wireless stations precisely so that the war would be confined to Europe. Although they were largely successful, they did not deliver on the wider strategy. The Great European War became a world war within months.

Consider the fate of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. The populations of Australia and New Zealand were as outraged by Germany's invasion of Belgium as were many of those in the home country, and their governments rapidly resolved to send troops to Britain's support. Like those of India and Canada, they should have reached France and Flanders by the winter of 1914-15, but first they had to mop up the German colonies and potential cruiser bases in the south Pacific, then they were briefly prepared for a stop in South Africa to aid the government in the suppression of the Afrikaners' rebellion in support of Germany, and finally they reached the shores of Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. Not until mid-1916 did they enter the war on the Western Front, and even then contingents remained behind in Egypt and Palestine.

In order to concentrate their forces on the decisive point, understood to be the Western Front, the British had first to contain Germany's efforts to take the war elsewhere. Because Germany was located in the centre of Europe and its allies shared common frontiers, and because the Central Powers could largely operate on short chords across land, Berlin's strategy rested on a significant geographical advantage. Britain and its allies may have encircled the Central Powers from west, east and (after Italy's entry in 1915) to south, but they did so on exterior, maritime lines of communication, and the circumference of their embrace was punctured to the south-east, in the Balkans, and uncertain to the north, in the Baltic and neutral Scandinavia.

The post-war memoirs of the senior British statesmen and their generals caricatured the strategy Britain then developed as a competition between 'westerners' and 'easterners'. Echoes of that debate are to be found in this volume. It is, however, a portrayal which simplifies and distorts the complexity of the issues - and not just over whether the choice was between concentration

on the decisive point or an 'indirect approach' to victory. The term 'westerner' clearly referred to France and Flanders, but the geographical polarity was misleading: however ardent the 'easterner', he (and they were all men) knew that Britain could not let France be overrun by Germany and that its defence was the overwhelming British priority in the land war. Much more ambiguous was what was meant by the 'east'. In British hands, it never had the simplicity or unity of the Armée de l'Orient. For Lord Kitchener in 1914-15 it meant Russia, the ally with the greatest manpower potential on Germany's other flank. That definition of an 'easterner' would justify not only the attempt to open the warm-water route to Russia's Black Sea ports through the Dardanelles but also the pursuit of Balkan allies which underpinned the Salonika campaign. However, Kitchener's last job before the war had been as the Sirdar of Egypt. Formally Cairo was still claimed by the Ottomans, and for this sort of 'easterner' the focus was not Russia, but the war against the Turks. It implied both defence and attack: the defence of the imperial artery of the Suez canal and the outer ramparts of the Indian empire in southern Arabia and Mesopotamia, and attack in order to expand the buffer zones which shielded both. A definition of the 'east' so broad that it ran from Petrograd in the north to Baghdad in the south, and from Salonika or Istanbul to the Urals or to the Hindu Kush, lacked geographical specificity; it was not one which had much value to British strategists in 1914-18, and unsurprisingly it was, at this level of generality, almost entirely absent from their discussions. British strategists may have used big hands on small maps, but even they could be more precise than this.

Formulating Strategy

In 1914, unusually, Britain had a body tasked with thinking about strategy in global terms and with coordinating the levers of state power, principally the army and the navy. But the Committee of Imperial Defence was an advisory committee of the cabinet, and with the outbreak of the war it was marginalised. Strategy was now so important that it became the prime business of the cabinet itself. Britain took the first half of the war to bed down an institutional framework better suited to the scale and immediacy of the tasks which confronted it. In December 1916 David Lloyd George created a war cabinet. It was far from perfect; it was (understandably and probably rightly given the importance of the issues at stake) beset by internal argument and controversy; and it became encumbered with too many sub-committees. But it compared favourably with the institutions created to direct the war in other belligerents.

In 1917-18 Britain and its allies went a step further: they set up a Supreme War Council to direct the war. Because it was only just getting into its stride as the war ended, its contribution can be overlooked. However, its thinking on the relationship between the Western Front and other fronts is instructive. It did not dispute the centrality of the Western Front and the prioritisation of the war against Germany. That, all other arguments apart, was the inescapable logic of the US entry of the war, of the allies' dependence on the material support of the Americans, and of the formation of an American mass army. The only theatre to which the latter could sensibly be deployed was the nearest to America's eastern seaboard, France and its Atlantic approaches. The argument was similar for Britain: London could not have sent a mass army overseas and sustained it in an industrial war for over four years anywhere other than northern France. The shipping demands of trans-Atlantic conveyance, particularly given the presence of U-boats, were much more challenging than those of cross-Channel reinforcement and supply, but both routes were more direct and less demanding than those that passed through the eastern Mediterranean or round the Cape of Good Hope and into the Indian ocean.

This conclusion did not make the other theatres 'sideshows'. They were integral to the strategy for waging a world war. The tasks which faced the British war cabinet and the Supreme War Council were those of coordination, of making the other theatres serve the common purpose, and to ensure that in aiming to win the war in the west the allies did not lose it in the 'east' (wherever that might be) or in Italy or in the Balkans. Both the threat posed by a wider war and the opportunities it might present to contribute to final victory remained real enough right up until the armistice with Germany. In 1918, Erich Ludendorff, the First Quartermaster General of the German army, had not abandoned hopes of salvaging the war by conquests in the Caucasus and so securing the oilfields of Baku. At the end of September, his final collapse was triggered not by the allied breaching of the Hindenburg line in the west but by the breakthrough in the Balkans of the allied armies 'd'Orient', under French command, and Bulgaria's subsequent decision to seek terms.

The Nature of the Campaigns

The characteristics of these campaigns were diverse, not least climatically and geographically, but they were not always as different from the fighting in France and Flanders as received wisdom would suggest. In some - at Gallipoli or in Italy - the conditions of trench warfare were probably tougher than those of the Western Front. The so-called 'learning curve' undergone by the BEF as it faced the Germans found its application against other opponents, especially in Allenby's campaign against the Turks in Palestine. Different terrains offered conditions in which other versions of combined arms warfare than that applied on the Western Front could be appropriate - not least in the use of cavalry alongside aircraft and modern artillery in Palestine.

Although both Gallipoli and Italy were largely static, the campaigns against the Ottomans in 1917-18, in Iraq as well as in Palestine, and the fighting in sub-Saharan Africa were characterised by mobility, not all of it vouchsafed by cavalry. In the tsetse-fly areas of equatorial Africa horses did not survive long, and supplies were carried on the backs of thousands of locally-recruited porters. The sea provided the principal opportunity for strategic manoeuvre, as at Gallipoli, but also against the German colonies in Africa and the Pacific. Inland waterways then became the avenues of advance, as the Royal Navy reverted to the brown-water roles and gunboat duties of colonial conquest - on the Tigris and Euphrates in Iraq, the Rufiji in East Africa, and the Sanaga and Njong in the Cameroons.

The British Army

The British army in 1914 had a good excuse for not being fully ready for continental war. It was not conscripted and so lacked the potential for mass, and it had been slow to develop both a corps structure for command and a central general staff. These gaps had in part been justified by the need to optimise it for colonial warfare. The British Army, unlike its European peers, had to be ready to fight in a bewildering variety of different theatres of war, so eschewing the certainty and comfort of preparing for one. Before 1914 it had made a virtue of flexibility and adaptability. The argument that it passed through a 'learning curve' on the Western Front is no more than a reflection that as a consequence it had to adapt while in contact with the enemy, hardly a desirable way of doing things. It made a virtue of an undesirable necessity. But the corollary should have been that it had less to learn in theatres outside Europe. In the South African War, disease, not battle, had remained the principal killer, as it had in earlier wars. In 1914-1918 that was no longer the case on the Western Front, but it was still true on all the army's other fronts, despite the massive strides in preventive medicine between 1902 and 1914. Britain's colonial campaigns had required staffs whose strengths were more administrative than operational, and which focused on transport and supply rather than operational design to ensure manoeuvre. And yet in the First World War these were the very areas where command and control collapsed, particularly in Mesopotamia and in Africa. Both the 1909 Field Service Regulations and the courses at the Staff College at Camberley had recognised that the Army would have to operate with the Royal Navy, and yet too much still had to be learnt and digested after 1914. The fact that the operations away from France and Flanders had so much in common with colonial warfare made the defeats there - at Tanga in 1914, Gallipoli in 1915 and Kut in 1916 - much more egregious than any failure on the Western Front.

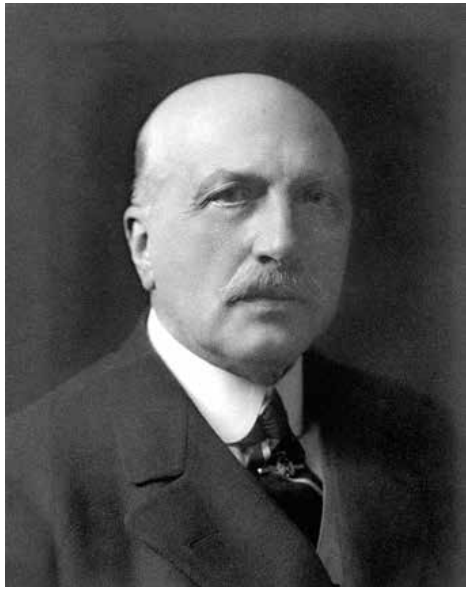
A partial explanation for these setbacks may lie in the comparative success enjoyed by Britain in concentrating its regular and best trained forces in France: in this sense the persuasiveness of the 'westerner' argument was predicated on accepting setbacks elsewhere. Before 1914, Britain had relied on locally recruited forces to provide the bulk of its armies in the empire. The Indian army was the largest of these and, like the forces of the 'white' dominions, it was deployed outside its own frontiers in 1914. It sent expeditionary forces to France, Egypt, Iraq and East Africa, but none of them had been properly staffed and fully trained for these imperial roles. The campaigns in Africa were largely fought by forces, both white and black, raised in Africa. Britain was not alone in struggling to find the manpower for a global war. France brought troops from it colonies to fight and die for the metropole. From the outset the German army knew it did not have the men to fight its enemies overseas, and so had to create proxy forces through the call to revolution. Britain did the same, inciting the Arabs to topple the Ottomans.

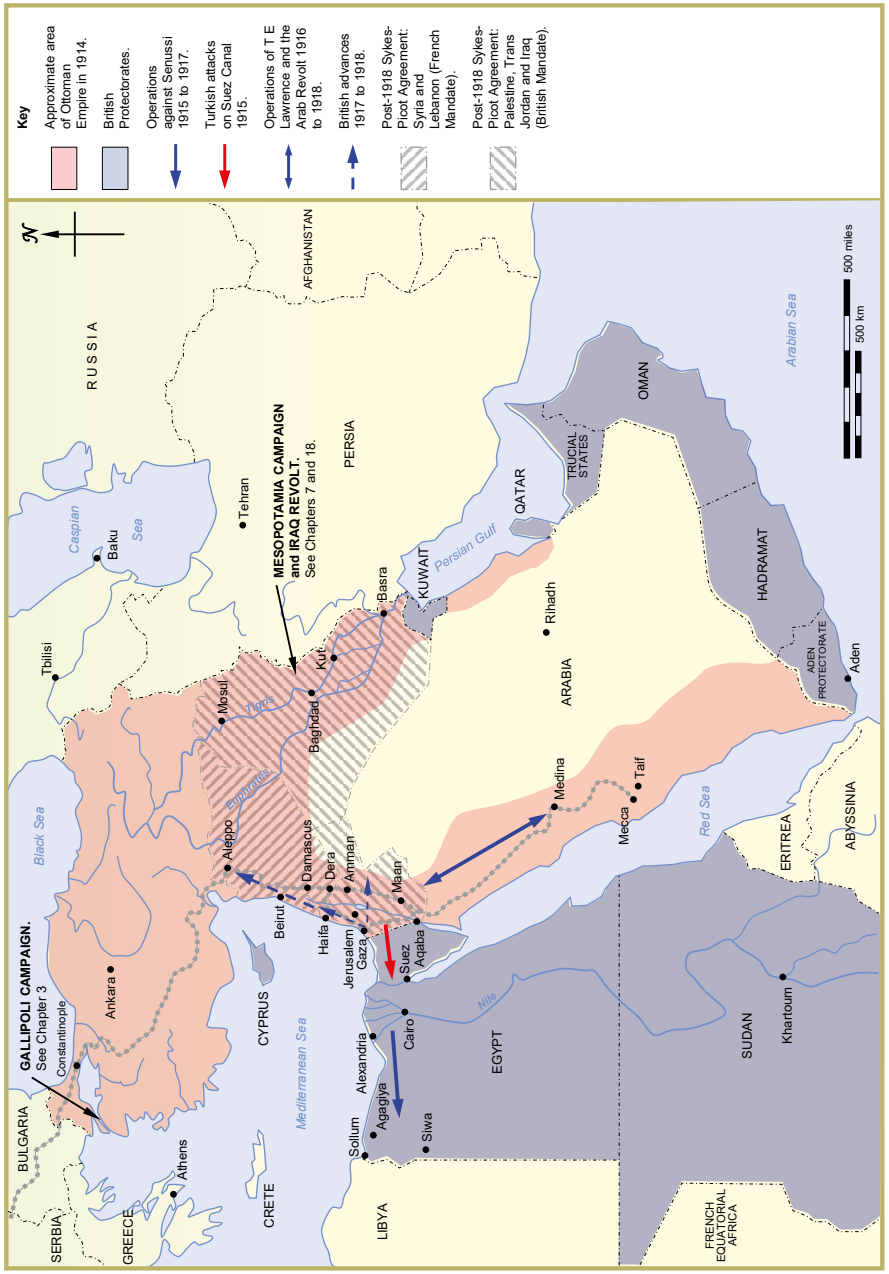
Only One War Ends

Revolution was a dangerous tool for an imperial power with an interest in the status quo. The 'forgotten fronts' were not sideshows, not least because they were not simply adjuncts to the war in Europe. They were wars in their own right, or became so by dint of the opportunity which the European conflict provided, and of the ambitions for national, political or religious identity which one or other of the belligerents kindled. The only war which ended on 11 November 1918 was the war with Germany. As this book rightly points out, the world war went on until at least the treaty of Lausanne in 1923 settled the frontiers and status of the Turkish republic. But by then it was obvious that what posed as world war was in reality a number of different wars bandwaggonning on each other. In November 1919, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the armistice, Sir Henry Wilson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, pointed out to Lord Esher that instead of a single war 'we have between 20 and 30 wars raging in different parts of the world'. Wars can be much harder to end than to begin, and the conclusion to the First World War was as fractured, fragmented and protracted as its intensity and scale might have portended.

Britain had entered the war in 1914 not least because it knew its hold on empire was dependent on security and balance in Europe. The First World War only reinforced the indivisibility of British interests in Europe and across the world. At every stage of the fighting it grappled with their interconnections, just as its foreign policy struggled to do so from the moment it committed itself to the Anglo-French entente in 1905. That was a deal brokered over empire but it was forged in the furnace of European conflict. For effectively eight years the British army's campaigns reflected the scale of that commitment. Because it could not in practice do everything, and because Britain - unlike France - was spared invasion and occupation, it looked as though it was exercising strategic choice. The word 'sideshows' implies that Britain had some discretion as to where and how it applied its forces, and could prioritise accordingly. In reality it struggled to do so. Britain learnt once again, as the Duke of Wellington had opined in 1838, that there was no such thing as a small war for a great power. Britain had to make war as it must, not as it might have wished.

1.1 Lord Esher © NPG





Map 2.1 The Ottoman Empire

2. The Western Desert, Egypt, Palestine and Syria

Dr John Peaty

	The Campaign in the Western Desert, Egypt, Palestine and Syria	
	British / Arab	**Ottoman**
Commanders	Lieutenant General John Maxwell Lieutenant General Charles Dobell Lieutenant General Phillip Chetwode Lieutenant General Henry Chauvel Lieutenant General Archibald Murray (March 1916) General Edmund Allenby (June 1917) Lieutenant General Edward Bulfin Faisal bin Hussein TE Lawrence Ja'far (Changed sides after capture)	**German** Lieutenant General Kress von Kressenstein General Erich von Falkenhayn (October 1917) Lieutenant General Liman von Sanders (March 1918) **Ottoman** Mustapha Kemal Jevad Pasha Fevzi Pasha Ahmed Sharif el Senussi Ja'far
Forces	Egyptian Expeditionary Force (October 1917): 3 corps (10 divisions + 4 brigades) - 75,000 infantry, 17,000 cavalry, 475 guns	Lightning Force (October 1917): 2 armies with 3 corps (10 divisions) - 40-45,000 infantry, 1,500 cavalry, 300 guns.
Context	A subsidiary though important theatre in which the defensive was succeeded by the offensive.	A subsidiary though important theatre in which the offensive was succeeded by the defensive.
Casualties	**British Empire** - 550,000;	**Ottoman Empire** - unknown but greater
Consequences	Defence of Suez Canal. Invasion of Palestine. Destruction of enemy forces.	
Lessons	Surprise. Manoeuvre. Mobility. Training.	

Overview

The Egypt, Palestine and Syria campaign of the Middle Eastern theatre of the First World War was fought between the British Empire and the Ottoman Empire. It started with the Ottomans attacking the Suez Canal in February 1915 and ended with the Ottomans signing an Armistice at Mudros in October 1918.

The campaign had three main phases:

- The defence of the Canal and of Egypt proper and the recapture of Sinai;
- The invasion of Palestine and the capture of Jerusalem;
- The destruction of Ottoman forces at Megiddo and the pursuit through northern Palestine, Lebanon and Syria.

The campaign began in February 1915 when Ottoman forces crossed Sinai and attacked the Canal. At the Battle of Romani in August 1916 the Canal was secured and with the Battle of Rafa in January 1917 British forces completed the recapture of Sinai. In March and April 1917 British forces were repulsed at the First and Second Battles of Gaza, the gateway to Palestine. After a change in command and careful preparation, British forces won the Third Battle of Gaza. Jerusalem was captured in December 1917. For much of 1918 stalemate prevailed and British operations were limited to raids along and across the River Jordan. After more careful preparation, in September 1918 British forces destroyed the Ottoman forces at the Battle of Megiddo. The remainder of Palestine was captured and the pursuit continued into Syria, Damascus, Beirut, and finally Aleppo being captured before the Ottoman surrender.

The British forces employed in the campaign contained contingents from all parts of the Empire, most notably Australia, New Zealand and India. The Turkish forces employed included

German and Austrian contingents. The campaign was not very well known or understood during the war. Many (called 'westerners') opposed the campaign, believing it a sideshow, a diversion of resources from the main theatre, the Western Front. Some (called 'easterners') supported the campaign, having reservations about the Western Front and believing that victory could be found elsewhere. The result of the campaign was the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the creation of modern Turkey and the de facto acquisition of the non-Turkish provinces of the Empire by Britain and France. The legacy of the defeat and break up of the Ottoman Empire is still very much visible in the Middle East today.

Background

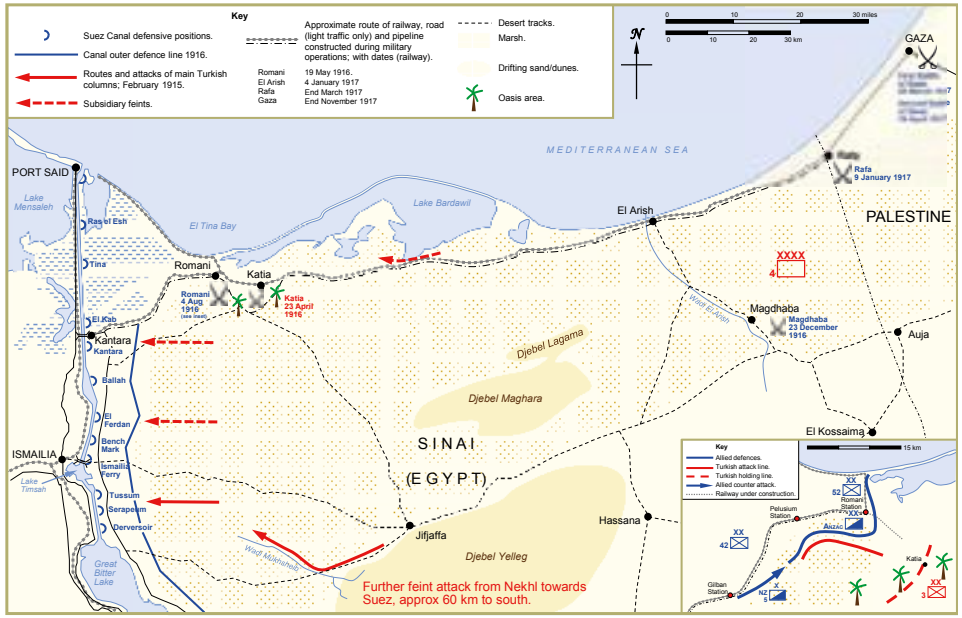
In November 1914 the Ottoman Empire came into the war on Germany's side and against Britain, thanks to German influence and the attitude of Enver Pasha, the power behind the throne. Though a ramshackle and antiquated power in decline, the Ottoman Empire had several strengths, including its challenging geography and the fighting qualities of the Anatolian peasant.

Ever since it opened in 1869, Britain's main concern was to safeguard the Suez Canal, the shortest route to India, the Far East and Australasia. This strategic waterway was vitally important, the windpipe of the British Empire, which reacted dramatically to any hint of a threat to its security. For this reason British troops had invaded Egypt in 1882 and had stayed there. Though Egypt remained nominally a Turkish province ruled by a viceroy, Britain was the de facto ruler. After the declaration of war Britain replaced the nominal ruler with a more amenable figurehead and made Egypt a protectorate.

The garrison was increased with the arrival of four newly formed divisions: two Indian and the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC), comprising 1st Australian Division and the Australian & New Zealand Division. By early 1915 there were 70,000 men. For the moment the Canal helped to provide for its own defence, acting as a moat behind which its defenders sat.

First Phase: Defence of the Suez Canal and Recapture of Sinai (1915-17)

The Germans sent to Syria one of their best staff officers, General Kress von Kressenstein, who encouraged the Turks to mount an expedition against the Suez Canal. It was a huge challenge. While no opposition was likely in the Sinai peninsula, crossing it would be fraught as it had hardly any water and no roads. Even the tough Turks could not see how they could deploy more than 3 weak divisions (20,000 men) to face the 4 strong if green divisions and other troops in Egypt. The aim of the Turks was opportunistic: at best to start an Egyptian revolt, at worst to destroy a part of the Canal. Kressenstein sent a detachment along the obvious and easiest route, along the coast, and another along the southern route while the main force advanced through the middle of Sinai. The Turks dragged German-made pontoons with them. On the Canal, they had to face not only the Indian defenders but Allied warships moored in it and on the lakes. From every aspect, it was an ambitious undertaking. As the Turks approached on the evening of 2 February 1915



Map 2.2 Sinai

2.1 Mounted Senussi troops advancing towards the Suez Canal, 1915 © IWM

a dust storm started, blinding the sentries. The attack was launched in the early hours of the 3rd between Lake Timash and the Great Bitter Lake. Three boats actually crossed the canal, but all the men were killed or captured. The main force, shelled by the guns of the ships, never managed to close and quickly retired. Lieutenant General John Maxwell, commanding the forces in Egypt, could not properly pursue the Turks for lack of suitable transport. The expedition was a failure yet generated respect for the Turks.

During the rest of 1915 Egypt was denuded of forces as they were deployed to Gallipoli. From November attention focused on the Western Desert. Turkish propaganda and German gold had whipped up the Senussi, an Islamic sect which lived across the border in Cyrenaica under Ahmed Sharif. He proved surprisingly dangerous because he had an excellent Turkish officer, an Arab called Ja'far Pasha, to train and command his men. Enough troops remained in Egypt to deal with the Senussi but the difficulty was mobility rather than numbers and mobility involved the gathering of large convoys of camels. Months of tiring and unproductive marches and pursuits were punctuated by several relatively fierce fights.

At the end of 1915 and beginning of 1916 the Gallipoli forces returned to Egypt, joining the many wounded and sick who had already been evacuated. There was an understandable fear that the Gallipoli defeat would bolster Turkish ambitions towards Egypt. It was accepted that invasion would be possible only in winter, when some water would be available in Sinai. However, estimates both in Egypt and at the War Office of the strength of an invading force were absurdly high: 2-300,000 men. When William Robertson, a down to earth soldier and convinced 'westerner', became CIGS he slashed the estimate to 100,000. Before Robertson took over, fresh troops were actually sent out from Britain to defend Egypt against an illusory threat.

At Agagiya on 26 February 1916 Ja'far was captured in a superb charge by the Yeomanry. Though operations continued for another year until the recapture of Siwa Oasis, never again did the Senussi withstand a British attack.

Influenced by their inflated estimate of the strength which the Turks could deploy against the Canal, at the beginning of 1916 the British were building a defence line on its eastern side. It was a massive undertaking, involving metalled roads, water supply, floating bridges, railway extensions plus entrenchment and wiring on a huge scale.

In January 1916 Lieutenant General Archibald Murray arrived to command the forces on the Canal, Maxwell[1] commanding the other forces in Egypt. In late 1915 the War Office had created in Egypt the Levant Base to serve Gallipoli and other theatres. So there were for a while 3 independent commands in Egypt, a ridiculous arrangement which was the subject of scathing comment. In March the commands were unified into the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) under Murray.

Between February and June, most of the fourteen divisions in Egypt were transferred to France and Mesopotamia. This left Murray with only four Territorial divisions. However, he was permitted to retain a large and excellent mounted force, comprising the Australian & New Zealand Mounted

2.2 CIGS letter to Murray 1916. Note that Robertson had taken over from Murray as CIGS

Division under Henry Chauvel (an Australian) and several Yeomanry brigades and regiments, some still engaged in the Western Desert.

Murray proposed moving into Sinai, arguing that a forward defence of the Canal would be more cost-effective than a passive one. Though the Canal defences were still incomplete, approval was given and Murray pushed into Sinai. He was laying a railway, a water pipeline and an improvised road and had to cover them by quite strong forces. The start was inauspicious: Kressenstein with a force of 3,500 surprised a Yeomanry brigade camped at oases in the Katia area on 24 April and destroyed four squadrons. However, progress was delayed for only a few days.

Murray had concluded that the best line on which to defend the Canal was that between El Arish on the coast (100 miles from the Canal and 30 miles from the Palestine frontier) and Kossaima, because all the tracks which could be used by an invading force went through one or the other. Though he had spoken of a huge Turkish army crossing Sinai at great speed, his own advance was a plodding one, tied to the railway, the pipeline and the road. He had excellent military and civil engineers and plentiful Egyptian labour. He progressed slowly but surely.

At the height of summer Kressenstein attacked again, with a force 15,000 strong, including German machine-gunners and artillerymen. This attack was almost as bold as his first and was much more challenging because of the summer heat and lack of water. This time the attack was aimed at the railhead at Romani near the coast. There was a slim chance of success because Murray could bring up much greater forces, provided they could be watered. Murray's initial strength around Romani was equivalent to that of Kressenstein.

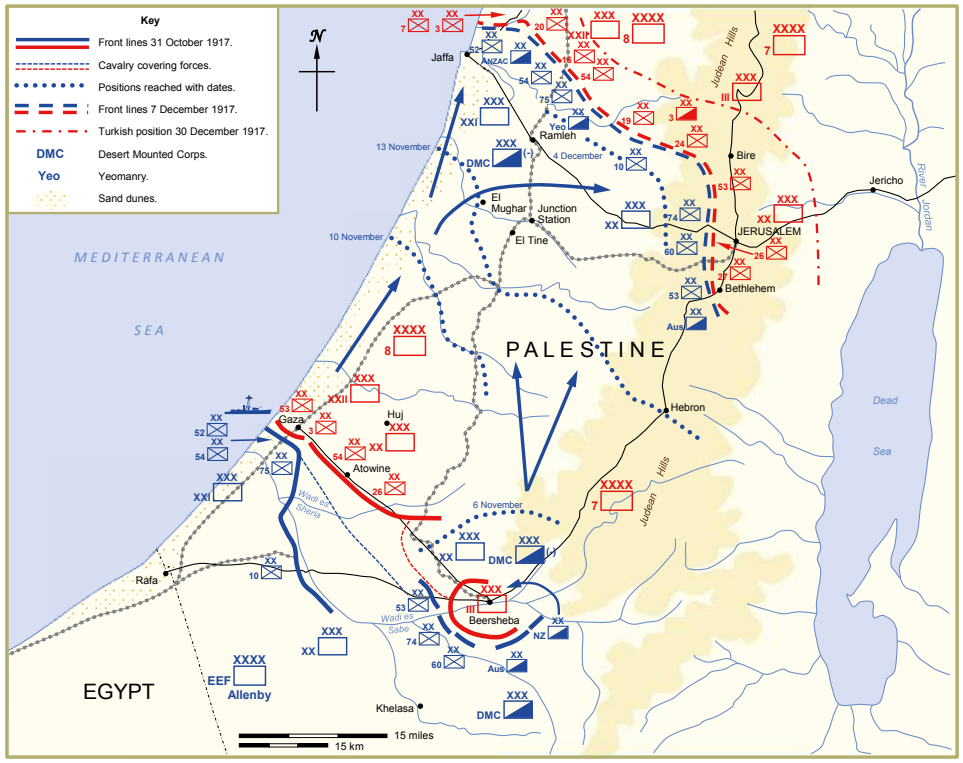
Displaying great bravery, the Turks attacked before dawn on 4 August 1916. Murray's left flank lay on the shore and was covered by the Bardia lagoon. He calculated that the Turks would try to turn his open right flank. He prepared a false flank, hiding the extension in the dunes and holding a mounted reserve ready to take the attacker in flank. He had calculated well but there were some mistakes and the decisive blow was delayed. As a result most of the Turks escaped. However, they were soundly beaten, losing 5-6,000 men for the loss of 1,100 British. The Turks retreated skilfully and demonstrated remarkable stamina in the face of great heat and little water, which hamstrung Murray's pursuing men and horses.

Apart from keeping the Canal and the Red Sea open, British policy was to prevent the Turks raising the Islamic world against the Allies in the name of Jihad (holy war). Support for a revolt in the Hejaz (containing the holy cities of Medina and Mecca) on the Arabian Peninsula was seen as the best way to do this. Encouraged by the British, an Arab revolt began in June 1916 near Medina and on the 9th they overthrew the small Turkish summer garrison of Mecca, largely thanks to the support of Egyptian mountain artillery. Taif, the summer station of the Turks, was a tougher proposition but its 3,000 men surrendered in September. After this the Turks held their own and little more was achieved during the remainder of 1916.

By December the EEF was nearing its objective. On the 23rd the Australian & New Zealand Mounted Division and the recently-formed camel brigade attacked the Turkish outpost of Magdhaba. After a tough fight, the EEF enveloped the Turkish redoubts and captured the entire garrison save for a few who escaped. It was now in the centre of the line on which Murray had planned to protect the Canal.

It had come a long way at great effort and great financial cost to protect the Canal. However, a halt was not called. There was enormous political pressure for a further advance. The new Prime Minister, Lloyd George, had been appalled by the losses on the Somme. A convinced 'easterner', he believed that Turkey could be eliminated from the war by a great victory in Palestine obtained at a relatively small cost in life.

Murray informed Robertson that he required two more divisions in order to invade Palestine. Robertson was reluctant to supply them but did not want to upset Lloyd George. Robertson, the clear-minded strategist was forced to adopt an ambiguous strategy. Murray's first duty remained the defence of Egypt but the invasion of Palestine was sanctioned as an extension of this (Falls & MacMunn, Egypt & Palestine, Vol. I, p260).



Map 2.3 Palestine 1917

Second Phase: Battles of Gaza, Invasion of Palestine and Capture of Jerusalem (1917)

On 9th January 1917 the EEF captured Rafa on the Palestine frontier in a brilliant action by mounted troops, mostly Australians and New Zealanders, led by Lieutenant General Philip Chetwode. Virtually the entire garrison of 2,000 was captured. At the same time one of Murray's four infantry divisions was transferred to France. However, he was strong in cavalry and mounted infantry, with two divisions made up of Australians, New Zealanders and Yeomanry.

He now decided to capture Gaza, the ancient gateway to Palestine. It was held by only seven Turkish battalions and five batteries (three of them Austrian or German). The plan of Murray's field commander, Lieutenant General Charles Dobell (a Canadian), was clever. The mounted troops would form a screen to hold off Turkish intervention from the East and South East while the infantry took Gaza from the South. It had to be done speedily because communications were stretched and it was unlikely that 9,000 horses could be watered anywhere other than in Gaza. On 26 March the attempt almost came off. It failed because of accidents, fog and misunderstandings. Led by von Kressenstein, Turkish intervention was prompt though not in great numbers. The cavalry was withdrawn to water just when it (not the infantry) had almost captured Gaza. The Turks were therefore able to close in on 27 March and enfilade Dobell's infantry with artillery fire. Dobell broke off the battle, withdrawing to his original position. Murray sent a misleading report which led Robertson to believe he had won a victory, with the result that he was informed that his 'immediate objective should be the defeat of the Turkish forces south of Jerusalem and the occupation of that town'.

On 19 April Murray made a second attempt on Gaza. Now, however, the Turks had dug in along the Gaza-Beersheba road and the approach was almost a glacis. The attack, pressed gallantly, was bloodily repulsed, with the loss of nearly 6,500 against only 2,000 on the Turkish side. The Cabinet and Robertson were appalled and Murray was recalled.

Allenby Takes Over

Murray was succeeded by General Edmund Allenby, who had commanded Third Army at Arras. A cavalryman, he was nicknamed 'The Bull' because of his impressive physique and explosive temper. Allenby took over a discouraged army and raised its morale in a matter of weeks. He moved GHQ from Cairo to the front. Like most new brooms he demanded the reinforcements denied to his predecessor, was given them and

2.3 General Sir Edmund Allenby - James McBey © IWM

carried out a thorough reorganisation. From Salonika came two divisions and two Yeomanry brigades, which were used to form the Yeomanry Mounted Division. A division was formed from British and Indian units in theatre. Another had already been created by Murray from Yeomanry dismounted since Gallipoli. Murray had dismissed Dobell. Allenby formed two infantry corps, XX under Chetwode and XXI under Bulfin (from Salonika), and a cavalry corps (the Desert Mounted Corps) under Chauvel. The EEF now had seven infantry and three mounted divisions (plus four brigades) for its third attempt on Gaza. A big army for the task and for a secondary theatre, especially as the Turks were in a poor way, plagued by desertion.

2.4 General Erich von Falkenhayn conversing with a Turkish officer © IWM

The growth of the EEF on the Palestine border had been noticed by the enemy. The new 'Yilderim' (Lightning) Force was deployed to Palestine under Falkenhayn (who had failed at Verdun but redeemed himself by his destruction of Rumania), the new Seventh Army under Fevzi Pasha joining the existing forces (now Eighth Army) under Kressenstein. Neither the whole of Seventh Army or Falkenhayn had reached the scene when Allenby attacked on 31 October 1917.

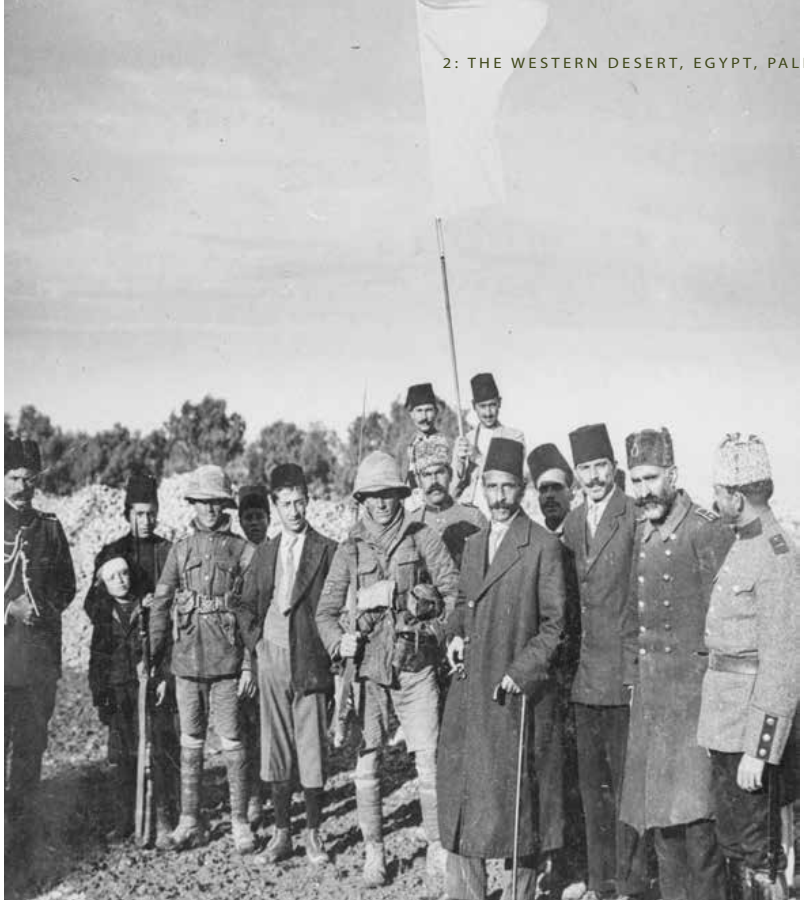
Allenby's ingenious and ambitious plan was not to assault Gaza but for his cavalry to encircle and take Beersheba (twenty five miles to the south east) and then roll up the Turkish front. The Beersheba attack has been criticized because it involved a long delay, giving the Turks time to react, and because the cavalry would have been forced to withdraw had the Turks destroyed the wells there. However, though the Turks defended Beersheba valiantly, they did not destroy the wells before they were driven out by a superb Australian charge. Before the rolling up had been finished by Chetwode, Allenby altered his plan and ordered Bulfin to break through at Gaza. Falkenhayn had already ordered Gaza's abandonment but the Turkish attempt to stand north of it was doomed in any case. Allenby's surprise manoeuvre had driven the Turks, some in panic, off the entire Gaza-Beersheba line. Because of mistakes and especially the lack of water, the cavalry failed to take great numbers of prisoners. However, Allenby had routed the Turks, captured much of their artillery and opened the gates into Palestine.

Entry into Jerusalem

After the capture of Gaza the British left wing fought its way up the coastal plain untroubled by weak attacks launched against its exposed flank by Falkenhayn. Part of the force wheeled eastwards into the Judean Hills towards Jerusalem on 15 November and this resulted in hard fighting. Falkenhayn launched heavy attacks and some of them partially succeeded. Allenby realised that his advanced forces were not strong enough. After much effort and much loss, he was finally able to launch an attack on Jerusalem, from the west mainly but also from the south. Success was complete and on 9 December the chief official came out to announce that the Turks had gone and to hand over the keys of the city. Six weeks after he had launched his invasion of Palestine, on the 11 December 1917 Allenby entered Jerusalem on foot and with humility, as a liberator and not a conqueror. He and his men had fulfilled the requirements of Lloyd George, whose parting injunction to Allenby had been 'Jerusalem by Christmas'. The taking of the Holy City was the cause of much satisfaction in a war-weary Britain, though its value was more moral than material.

On 26 December the Turks made a strong attempt to recover Jerusalem, attacking with three divisions. The attempt was forlorn because Chetwode was alert and had greater forces. The Turks were repulsed with heavy loss. The following day Chetwode attacked and within four days had pushed the Turks eight miles from Jerusalem. The year ended quietly.

The EEF had taken about 12,000 prisoners and 100 guns. Up to the capture of Jerusalem its losses were about 18,000 compared to about 25,000 on the Turkish side. Given that Allenby had a superiority of well over 2 to 1 in infantry and 8 to 1 in cavalry, his victory may not seem as extraordinary as it was. However, as at Gallipoli, it was a tough and costly job to dislodge Turkish troops from defensive positions in hilly and rocky country. But perhaps



2.5 The Mayor of Jerusalem, Dr Hussein Salim al-Husseini (with walking-stick and cigarette), with his party under a white flag-of-truce, attempts to deliver the Turkish Governor's letter surrendering the city to Sergeants James Sedgwick and Frederick Hurcombe of 2/19th Battalion, London Regiment just outside Jerusalem's western limits in the early morning of 9 December 1917

The two sergeants (fourth and seventh from left), who were scouting ahead of General Allenby's main force, refused to take the letter, which was eventually accepted by Brigadier-General C F Watson, Commanding 180th Infantry Brigade. The resplendent figure at far left is Habj Abd al-Kadir, Chief of the Jerusalem Police Force © IWM

2.6 Official entry to Jerusalem, 11 December 1917. General Allenby at the steps of the Citadel(entrance to David's Tower) listening to the reading of the Proclamation of Occupation in seven languages © IWM

the greatest achievement was on the logistical side. There were only two roads on which lorries could be used fully. Most of the munitions and supplies had to be transported by horses, camels, mules and (in the hills) donkeys.

Third Phase: Stalemate, Raids, the Battle of Megiddo and the Pursuit (1918)

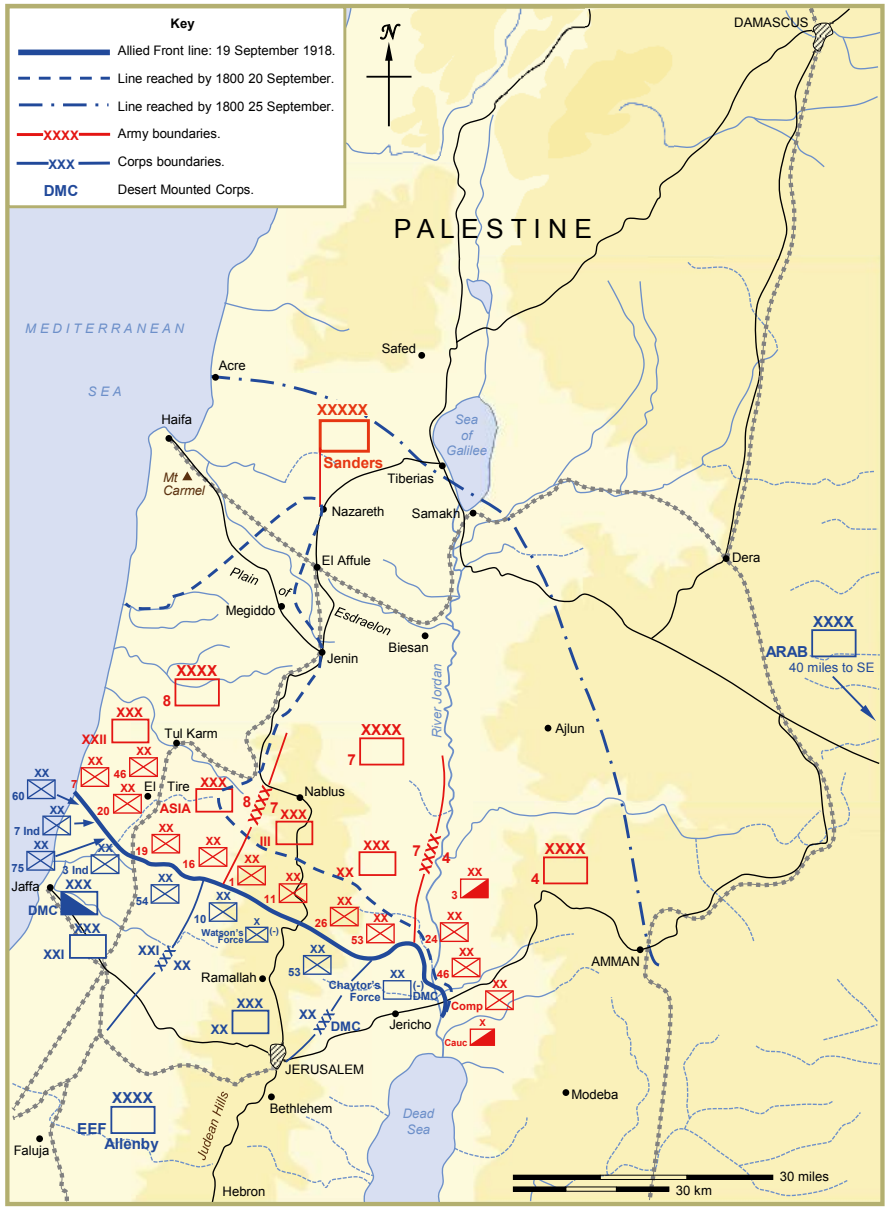
Allenby has been accused by some of dawdling and wasting opportunities after establishing a front north of Jerusalem and Jaffa. It is impossible to prove such a thrusting man guilty of that charge. Torrential rain flooded the lowlands. Bridges and culverts were swept away by the torrents. He was forced to begin 1918 by reorganizing his communications. Some say he could have smashed the Turks in March but the evidence points the other way. On the 21st of that month he launched a raid across the Jordan aimed at Amman and had to acknowledge failure in the face of Turkish resistance. He launched a second raid on Amman on 30 April and again was forced to withdraw. Clearly, the Turks were more robust then than the critics would have. In the Jordan valley Allenby even lost some guns, from British RHA batteries of the Australian Mounted Division.

By the end of March a major offensive was out of the question for months to come. The great German onslaught in France was followed by the War Office call for reinforcements. Lloyd George had insisted on keeping many good British troops in a theatre of minor strategic significance and the Western Front had paid the price. Allenby sent back two divisions and the infantry strength of three more, in all nearly 60,000 men. In numbers he did not suffer. He received two Indian divisions from Mesopotamia and Indian battalions to replace the British sent to France, but the single battalions arrived slowly and some were raw. On the other hand, all Indian cavalry regiments in France were sent to him. He could therefore create a fourth cavalry division and build up the Desert Mounted Corps to a very powerful force. Small French infantry and cavalry detachments, tokens of France's interest in Syria, were embodied. It was autumn before Allenby was ready to strike again.

By then the Turkish forces had deteriorated greatly. They were hungry through lack of supplies, afflicted with disease and their LOC swarmed with deserters. In infantry divisions the Turks far outnumbered Allenby's seven, but their rifle strength was under half the British and the artillery about two thirds. Falkenhayn had been replaced by Liman von Sanders of Gallipoli fame. He was a good soldier, he knew the Turkish Army and he was more popular than his predecessor. However, while Falkenhayn had favoured an elastic defence, Liman unwisely ordered his men to fight it out where they stood.

The Turks were not left alone over the summer. The heaviest pressure was applied against them far from the main front, along the Hejaz Railway, which terminated at the holy city of Medina, where the southernmost Turkish garrison was holed up. Murray had consistently supported the Arab revolt. Just as Allenby took over, the Arabs captured the port of Aqaba on the Red Sea. Allenby, gave the Arabs all the support he could - personnel, material (including armoured cars) and money. The link between him and the Arabs was a little group of British officers, the most famous of whom was T. E. Lawrence, who had a spiritual affinity with the Bedouin and was a master of guerrilla tactics and strategy. The Turks were confined to the railway, which they held by a series of blockhouses at the stations. From Ma'an to Medina, where the two largest garrisons lay, they had about 25,000 troops. An Arab 'regular army' of some five battalions and light artillery was formed under ex-POW Ja'far. The Bedouin were happy to take the field and stay in the field so long as they received arms and gold. In April the line on either side of Ma'an was completely destroyed over a long stretch.

2.7 Hejaz Railway - Rail suspension bridge over the Yarmuk, just beyond where it joins the Jordan. Old Roman Bridge beyond © IWM



Map 2.4 Megiddo

This finally isolated Medina because the Turks could no longer replace those rails destroyed or removed. Medina continued to be besieged by the Arab southern army but with the capture of Aqaba the war in Arabia had left the Hejaz far behind. The northern army was under the command of the Emir Feisal, son of Sherif Hussein, who had assumed the title of King of the Hejaz. It took its general directions from Allenby. Feisal and Lawrence were ready to call out thousands of nomads and villagers and to march north on Allenby's right flank when he took the offensive.

2.8 The Advance through Palestine and the Battle of Megiddo: Emir Feisal walking along a pier, his robes fluttering, towards a waiting launch on the Dead Sea in Palestine © IWM

Allenby's plan was his own. It was a plan of genius and daring. It relied on deception and a deep penetration by his cavalry, out-running its supplies and living off the land. Allenby would mass his infantry in the coastal plain, to wheel forward, the left wing moving fastest, as though he were opening a gate in the Turkish front. Through the gate he would pass the Desert Mounted Corps of three cavalry divisions (the fourth being intended to act on the right flank across the Jordan). The cavalry would ride fast northward, cross the hill chain which ends in Mount Carmel, descend into the Plain of Esdraelon and push eastward to the Jordan Valley at Beisan. The Turks, struggling northward after their defeat by his infantry, would be caught in a far-flung net.

2.9 1st Australian Light Armoured Car Patrol on the coast road west of Mount Carmel © IWM

The RAF screened the concentration. Reinforced with modern aircraft, it drove the Germans out of the skies. Allenby's dispositions and plans were successfully hidden by deceptions and ruses, which included camps with lines of dummy horses to make it appear that the cavalry was still near Jerusalem. At 0430 on 19 September his massed artillery opened a terrific bombardment, to which the Turkish reply was patchy and rapidly deteriorated. Minutes after the bombardment had commenced, before dawn, Bulfin's five infantry divisions swarmed into the Turkish trenches, covered by a cloud of smoke and dust.

Liman was taken entirely by surprise. Turkish resistance was tough here and there but every obstacle was quickly turned. The attack went almost completely according to plan and signs of demoralization appeared when it reached the artillery positions (Falls, Mil Ops, Egypt & Palestine, Vol. II, Pt. II, P482). At the same time the RAF spread terror and destruction. The rail junction at El Affule in the Plain of Esdraelon was put out of action for a while. The HQs of the 7th Army (Mustapha Kemal, hero of Gallipoli and later founder of modern Turkey) and the 8th (Jevad Pasha) were bombed, permanently severing Jevad's communications with Liman at Nazareth. Transport retreating northward was smashed, blocking the road out of Tul Karm, which the Turks failed to clear by night time. The great wheel was completed. Bulfin's front, facing nearly north in the morning, faced due east at midnight and his left wing was at Tul Karm, fourteen miles from the start-line. On a hot day, laden with ammunition and rations, in the face of an unexpectedly stubborn enemy just when he seemed to be throwing in the towel, it was a tremendous achievement by the infantry. They had not only opened a corridor for the cavalry but covered its right for the first fourteen miles of its advance.

In the plain the two Turkish divisions were reduced to groups of terrified fugitives seeking only to escape but there was no escape, for the cavalry was entering the passes in the Carmel range in their rear. The Turkish forces in the Judean Hills remained almost intact because Chetwode was too weak to do them much harm but their escape routes were about to be severed also.

The two leading cavalry divisions went forward about 0700 hrs, one along the beach, the other through a flagged gap cut in the Turkish wire. There was no resistance initially because the infantry had cleared the area. Any that occurred later was feeble because the sight of the plain swarming with cavalry was too much for the small groups of Turks encountered.

The leading regiment of the 4th Cavalry Division entered the Musmus pass through the Carmel chain in the darkness, trotting 20 minutes, walking 20, and halting 5 in its hurry to make up for a hitch which had caused a delay. In the early hours of 20 September it passed the ancient fortress of Megiddo (Armageddon) and emerged into the Plain of Esdraelon. There the first fight took place, a charge that routed a Turkish regiment which had arrived too late to block the pass. Then the division took El Affule. After a brief halt it moved down to Beisan. It had covered over 70 miles in 34 hours and lost only 26 horses. A tremendous achievement on the part of the Division's Indian and British Yeomanry regiments and British horse artillery. The troops were ecstatic with their accomplishment. The days of cavalry were clearly not over. In Palestine the cavalry had always

2.10 The advance through Palestine and the Battle of Megiddo: A sergeant directs orders whilst standing on one of the wooden saddles of the Camel Transport Corps © IWM

played a more prominent role than in other theatres. However, the Indian regiments had not enjoyed great success since their arrival. Now everyone was on cloud nine. For the time being the 4th Division could rest its tired horses and wait for thousands of Turks, dazed and fatigued, to march into its arms, sometimes after a short fight to get through.

The 5th Cavalry Division crossed the Plain of Esdraelon, climbed up to Nazareth, took it after fierce street fighting and just missed capturing Liman, who fled to Tiberias. The Australian Mounted Division, following the 4th Cavalry, sent a brigade eastward on a RAF report that large numbers of the enemy were retreating north from Jenin. The brigade took the town, blocked the main Nablus-Nazareth road and by the morning of the 21st had captured 8,000 prisoners, including Germans whose discipline remained intact.

Bulfin's and Chetwode's infantry did not relax the pressure, gradually disintegrating the 7th Army, capturing many thousands of prisoners and driving the rest into the cavalry net. Mount Carmel and Haifa were captured, the former by a remarkable cavalry charge along the crest. Samakh, on the Sea of Galilee, was captured by the Australians after a fierce battle with its small German garrison. Allenby had told Lawrence that the one vital point he could not reach quickly was Dera, the junction of the Palestine railways with the Hejaz Railway. Strongly defended, Feisal and Lawrence did not capture it until 27 September though they had already cut the line in several places and severely interrupted the traffic. The one blemish on Allenby's victory, his failure to block fords over the Jordan 15 miles South of Beisan, toward which much of the 7th Army was streaming in disorder, was removed by a brigade of the 4th Cavalry Division. Moving down both banks, it attacked boldly and by the end of the day had captured about twenty five times its own strength. The RAF had already destroyed the 7th Army's transport in the Wadi el Fara. Farther south the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division crossed the Jordan, captured Amman and blocked the path of the 4th Army retreating along the Hejaz Railway. It took 10,000 prisoners in total.

The extent of Allenby's victory made the seemingly impossible now possible. He was not in the habit of confiding in his subordinates but on 22 September he mentioned Damascus to Chauvel. After 4 days of staff work, Chauvel issued the following order:

> ***'Seventh and Eighth Turkish Armies have been destroyed. Fourth Army is retreating on Damascus via Dera. Desert Mounted Corps will move on Damascus' (Falls, Mil Ops, Egypt & Palestine, Vol. II, Pt ii, P723).***

The 4th Cavalry Division was to move east of the Sea of Galilee while the other two moved west of it, the Australians in the lead. At the same time Bulfin's infantry corps was to advance along the coast and take Beirut.

Both goals were achieved. Damascus was captured on 1 October (by the Australians, beating Lawrence and the Arabs) and Beirut on 8 October (by 7th Indian Division), after enormous efforts and for the cavalry and the Arabs hard fighting. In the operation about half the remainder of the 4th Army was killed or captured. Homs was captured by 5th Cavalry Division on the 16 October. It was then ordered onto Aleppo alone, 4th Cavalry Division having been put out of action by malaria and influenza. Aleppo was

2.11 Colonel Thomas Edward Lawrence wearing Arab clothing standing in a thicket of cactus © IWM

captured on the 25 October. On the 26th two Indian regiments were held at Haritan by two new divisions formed by Mustapha Kemal. It was the last action before the Mudros armistice. 5th Cavalry Division had advanced 550 miles in 38 days.

This was a phenomenal achievement but much more when it is considered that it lost only twenty one per cent of its horses from all causes and that these included four major fights.

Critics of Allenby say that he won fame in a battle against an opponent who was inferior in every way: 'a tiger against a tom cat'. Yet no other contemporary British general would have set objectives so ambitious. In under two weeks, he destroyed three Turkish Armies and took Damascus. He captured 75,000 prisoners (3,700 of them Germans and Austrians), for a loss of 5,666, only 650 in the Desert Mounted Corps. By any standard, Megiddo was a spectacular and decisive victory.

Conclusion

A campaign which began as a defensive and limited one to protect an important waterway became an offensive and unlimited one in which huge forces were deployed, great battles fought and massive territories captured. The objective changed from the defence of a vital point to the destruction of the enemy through offensive action. So British forces advanced 500 miles from the Suez Canal to Aleppo. This happened because of mission creep, because of set-backs on the Western Front and because political leaders distrusted military leaders on the Western Front and believed easy victories could be won in this theatre. The political context of the campaign must always be borne in mind.

British forces had to overcome enormous climatic, topographical, logistic and engineering challenges in order to achieve success in the campaign. Great distances were negotiated, great obstacles were overcome and a great victory won.

Not for the first time and not for the last in British military history, a competent commander who was given inadequate resources and unclear direction failed and was replaced by a more forceful commander who was given adequate resources and clear direction and succeeded.

Allenby was to win great renown but he never forgot the debt owed to Murray's groundwork:

> ***"I desire to express my indebtedness to my predecessor, who, by his bridging of the desert between Egypt and Palestine, laid the foundations for the subsequent advances of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. I reaped the fruits of his foresight and strategical imagination, which brought the waters of the Nile to the borders of Palestine, planned the skilful military operations by which the Turks were driven from strong positions in the desert over the frontier of Egypt, and carried a standard gauge railway to the gates of Gaza. The organisation he created, both in Sinai and Egypt, stood all tests and formed the corner-stone of my success".***

With a much lower force to space ratio and less formidable defences than on the Western Front, things were possible in this theatre that were impossible in France and Belgium, most notably wide envelopments by cavalry.

In Allenby's brilliant successes at Third Gaza and Megiddo the enemy's attention was attracted to a certain place, the breakthrough occurring elsewhere at the least expected place. At Third Gaza the breakthrough occurred away from the coast at Beersheba at the eastern end of the line while at Megiddo the breakthrough occurred on the coast at the western end of the line.

For Wavell (who served on the staff during the campaign), Allenby's successes demonstrated the importance of surprise (the product of mobility) and manoeuvre (the product of training).

For Liddell Hart, Megiddo was one of history's masterpieces and an exemplar of the 'indirect approach'. Downplaying the role of artillery and infantry, he attributed the enemy's rapid demoralisation and collapse to the surprise incursion and envelopment by mobile forces - cavalry, armoured cars, aircraft and irregulars.

The British suffered 550,000 casualties, more than 90% attributable to disease and sickness. Ottoman losses are unknown but almost certainly larger: three armies were lost in the fighting and the Ottomans poured a vast number of troops into the theatre.

The historical importance of the campaign cannot be overestimated. The British victory in the campaign and in the concurrent but unconnected Mesopotamia campaign led to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the creation of modern Turkey and the effective acquisition by Britain and France of the non-Turkish provinces of the Empire. The states of the Middle East would not exist today without the victory of the British Empire over the Ottoman Empire in the First World War.

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Endnotes

1. Maxwell moved to Dublin to become GOC Ireland and Military Governor in April 1916- see Chapter 4 - Rebellion in Ireland.

Map 3.1 Allied Naval Operation,18 March 1915

3. The Gallipoli Campaign

Peter Hart

	The Gallipoli Campaign	
	Allied	**Turkish**
Commanders	Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (General Sir Ian Hamilton).	Fifth Army (General Otto Liman von Sanders.
Forces	VIII Corps (29, RND, 42 and 52 Divisions). ANZAC Corps (1 and 2 Australian Divisions and New Zealand and Australian Division). IX Corps (10th, 11th, 13th, 53rd, 54th Divisions and 2nd Mounted Division). French Corps Expéditionnaire d'Orient (1st and 2nd Divisions).	I Corps (2 and 3 Divisions) II Corps (4, 5 and 6 Divisions) III Corps (7, 8, 9 and 19 Divisions) IV Corps (10, 11 and 12 Divisions) V Corps (13, 14 and 15 Divisions) Dardanelles Fortified Area Command
Context	Coordinated seaborne landings intended to seize the Kilid Bahr plateau overlooking and dominating the Narrows, thereby allowing the Allied fleet to gain the Sea of Marmara and threaten the Ottoman capital Constantinople.	The defence of the Gallipoli Peninsula to prevent the Allied incursion into the Sea of Marmara.
Casualties	British Empire casualties: 115,000 killed, wounded and missing; 90,000 evacuated sick. French: 27,000 killed, wounded and missing; 20,000 evacuated sick.	Turkish casualties: 186,869 killed, wounded and missing; 64,440 evacuated sick.
Consequences	Failed to achieve any of the objectives. Weakening of the Allied Forces available on the key Western Front. Undermining of the position of the British Empire in front of the Muslim world.	The Dardanelles Straits were secured for the rest of the war.
Lessons	The importance of concentrating on the main front against the main enemy - in this case Germany. The avoidance of sideshows that dissipate military resources. The importance of surprise, logistics and force generation. The inherent difficulties of large-scale amphibious landings. The importance of a realistic assessment of the enemy's strength and capabilities. The importance of decisive leadership.	

Introduction

In early 1915, the 'easterners' within the British government, (typified by First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill and Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George), were horrified by the bloody impasse on the Western Front. They sought an easier route to victory and looked to the tradition of British maritime warfare which, where possible, sought to avoid the pain of serious commitment in continental Europe and to 'snipe' around the edges, seizing exposed colonies and engaging in limited campaigns. In January 1915, the 'easterners' secured agreement from the War Cabinet to launch a naval assault on the Dardanelles Straits and Gallipoli Peninsula. The intent was to break through the Straits into the Sea of Mamora, from

where they could knock Turkey out of the war by threatening to bombard Constantinople. However the idea was based on a series of false assumptions by the 'easterners'. Germany would never be beaten by an ill-conceived adventure launched against Turkey: there was no 'back door' to Germany, no 'easy' route to victory. Turkey did not 'prop' up Germany, if anything the reverse was true. The Balkan states would never be collectively inspired to join the Allies as a result of an assault on Turkey - they were divided by far too much internecine hatred to allow any such common cause. More prosaically, even if the fall of Turkey had opened a southern sea route via the Black Sea to Russia, there was still no surplus of British munitions to send to Russia in 1915, and the Russians did not possess the logistical capacity to send any grain surplus to Britain.

In 1915, the British Empire did not have the military strength to fight two major campaigns - Gallipoli and the Western Front. Britain had to fight the war as it was; not as visionaries like Churchill dreamt it might be. Germany was encamped in France, occupying a good part of the French industrial heartland, with armies poised ready to strike at both the French capital and the Channel ports. The realities of alliance warfare meant that Britain could not just abandon France to her fate whilst pursuing adventures in the Middle East. Furthermore, Turkey was a distinctly unthreatening opponent if left to her own devices. They could have tried to cut British oil supplies in Mesopotamia, but these had already been secured by a small British expeditionary force in December 1914. It was only British hubris that promoted a series of wasteful and disastrous expeditions towards Baghdad in 1915. The Turks had also failed in their brave attack launched across the Sinai desert on the Suez Canal. Turkey could attack Russia through the Caucasus Mountains, but the Russians - assisted by awful winter conditions - had already destroyed a Turkish army. All in all, the Gallipoli campaign was a foolish strategic error from start to finish. The British were confident of victory, but underestimated Turkish resistance.

The failure of the Allied naval assault on 18 March 1915 triggered a land operation to capture the Kilid Bahr plateau which dominated the Turkish Narrows forts. The Allies had thus strayed from the original plans for a purely naval campaign. A makeshift Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (MEF) was patched together under the experienced command of General Sir Ian Hamilton. This consisted of the 29th Division (amassed from regular battalions recalled from garrison duties around the Empire); the French 1st Division of the Corps Expéditionnaire d'Orient (CEO), (a well-trained formation with a full complement of artillery); the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) and the Royal Naval Division (RND) (made up of troops under training - promising material, but with little or no experience as soldiers. The RND lacked any artillery). In reserve Hamilton had recourse to the 42nd Division (Lancashire Territorials) and an Indian Brigade based in Egypt. The force generation was poor, with units committed with scant attention to their readiness for serious operations.

The challenges facing the MEF should not be underestimated. This would be the first opposed landing in the era of modern weapons. It would have to be conducted on a narrow Peninsula, in a challenging terrain that favoured the defenders. The lack of an integrated combined operations strategy had caused serious delays which gave the Turks time to improve their defences. The logistical problems were formidable in the extreme: shortages of basic requirements such as H.E. ammunition, a location thousands of miles from the UK, across sea lanes vulnerable to U-boat attack, with no available port facilities in the landing area until the campaign had succeeded. With all chance of strategic surprise lost through the naval bombardments, all Hamilton could hope for was to employ an element of tactical subtlety to try and wrong-foot the Turks.

Planning and Preparation

Hamilton's plans were intended to confuse the Turkish leadership and were based on the belief that the Turks would pose little resistance once troops were ashore. Five separate landings were to be made by the 29th Division around the Helles tip of the Peninsula, the ANZAC Corps were to land on the beaches just north of Gaba Tepe further up the Peninsula, opposite Kilid Bahr,

3.1 General Otto Liman von Sanders at the Ottoneum circa 1913
© LoC - George Grantham Bain Collection

3.2 Mustafa Kemal, Anafartalar, Canakkale 1915
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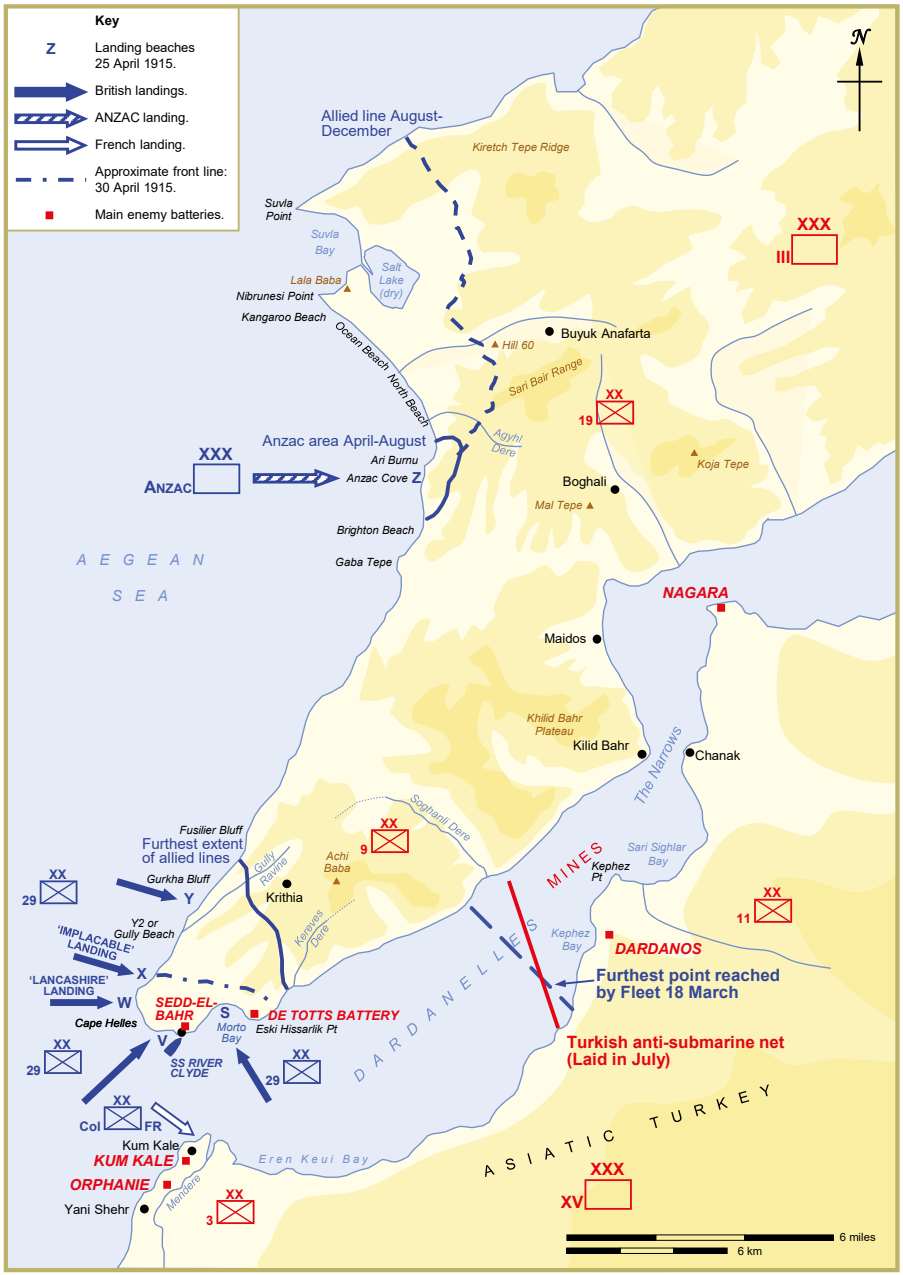


Map 3.2 Gallipoli Operations

and the French would land at Kum Kale on the Asiatic coast as a diversion and to protect the back of the 29th Division. Just to complicate matters further, diversionary operations would be launched by the French at Besika Bay on the Asiatic coast, and by the RND at the Bulair neck of the Peninsula. The British maps and intelligence were adequate, augmented by aerial photographs, but it is apparent that little notice had been taken of the strength of Turkish defences in deciding landing points. In summary, Hamilton divided his forces, failing to concentrate overpowering strength at any single point and thereby opened up the possibility of failure everywhere.

General Otto Liman von Sanders was in command of the Turkish Fifth Army which had the responsibility for defending Gallipoli. The Turkish plans were influenced by German doctrine, based on light coastal screens intended to act as a 'trip wire' and cause the maximum possible delay. This would give von Sanders time to establish the main focus of the attack. He would then deploy his reserves, hitherto held back from the coast, to launch counter-attacks and sweep the Allied invaders back into the sea. The Turks had the advantage of local knowledge and understood the terrain.

The Campaign

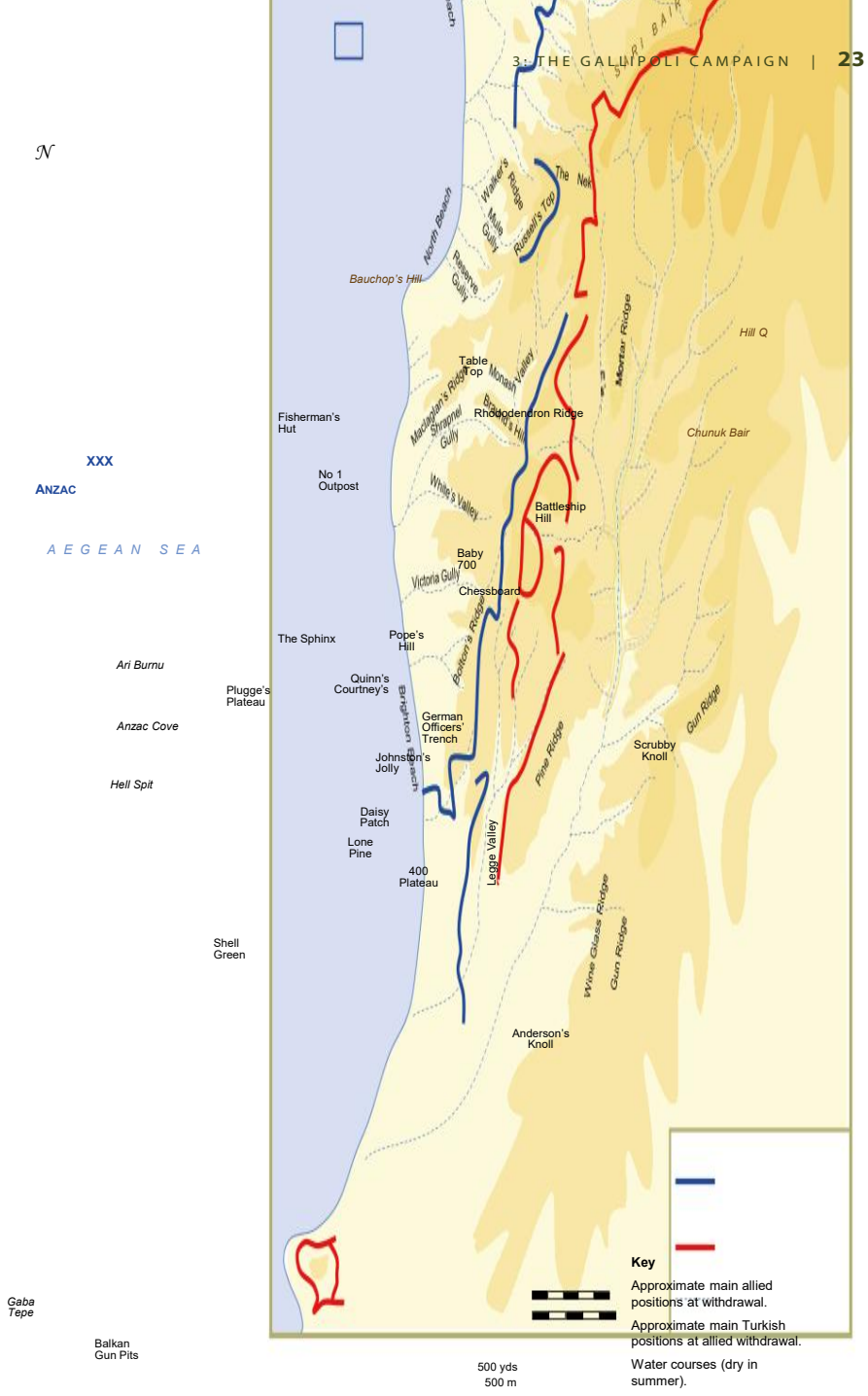
The ANZAC Corps made a night landing at 04.30 on 25 April 1915. Their first day objective was the Mal Tepe hill. Next day, they were to prevent the move of Turkish reinforcements and cooperate with the 29th Division in the capture of the Kilid Bahr plateau. The men were brought ashore in naval cutters towed in strings behind steam boats, before sailors rowed them in on the final approach. The landing was almost unopposed, but the confusions all too prevalent in night operations disrupted the first wave, causing them to land bunched around the Ari Burnu point, at the northern end of what became known as ANZAC Cove. As they moved inland they were harassed by the single company of the 2/27th Regiment that was the only initial Turkish opposition. Confused by the tortuous terrain and threatened by the approach of the first Turkish reserves, the ANZAC commanders were unable to get a grip on the situation. In particular, the covering force (3rd Australian Brigade) stopped prematurely on Second Ridge and did not establish the intended positions on Third Ridge. They therefore failed in their designated role and as a direct result the follow up brigades were sucked piecemeal into the battle without any focussed drive towards the intended objectives. When the twin-pronged Turkish counter-attack developed under the inspirational leadership of Colonels Sefik Aker (27th Regiment) and Mustafa Kemal (19th Division), the ANZAC Corps found itself pinned back on Second Ridge and it was soon evident that they had not established a feasible bridgehead. ANZAC was shallow strip, no more than ½ kilometre deep, and the Turks were in control of all the dominating heights reaching down from the Sari Bair ridge. The military situation was dire, but when the Royal Navy recommended on practical grounds against an immediate evacuation, the ANZAC Corps was forced to dig in. The terrain favoured defence for both sides and consequently occasional Turkish attacks over the next few months were unable to achieve breakthrough. The ANZAC Corps defence of ANZAC was heroic, but it contributed little or nothing to the Allied attempts to seize the Dardanelles in the months before the August offensive.

Helles Peninsula

The 29th Division landed after dawn at the S, V, W, X and Y Beaches around the Helles Peninsula on the morning of 25 April. The first day objective was the hill of Achi Baba which dominated Helles. Next day, they were intended to assault the real objective of the Kilid Bahr Plateau in conjunction with the ANZAC Corps. They were facing just one battalion of Turks: the 3/26th Regiment. The troops got ashore almost unopposed at S, X and Y Beaches, but then failed to take the initiative, even though they massively outnumbered the Turks at Helles. The subordinate commanders were hamstrung by a combination of over-exaggerated estimates of the size of local Turkish forces and myriad problems in communications, command and control. The Y Beach force failed to exploit their position, but, worse still, failed to dig in. They were then placed under severe pressure when the incoming Turkish reinforcements launched a series of purposeful night attacks which ultimately triggered the British withdrawal on the morning of 26 April.

At W and V Beach the beaches were defended by well dug in Turks and barbed wire defences. The tows of rowing boats proved easy targets to the Turkish riflemen, who generated a storm of bullets. At W Beach they eventually got ashore, but were soon held up further inland. At V Beach, the tows had been augmented by a specially converted tramp steamer. The *River Clyde* ran ashore on the beach ready to land some 2,500 troops. This should serve as an example of the dangers of ill-considered plans. The holes cut in the sides and the gangways running to a front platform proved death-traps into which the Turks poured fire. The small steamer intended to tow the barges into position to form a bridge ashore had a significant proportion of neutral Greeks amongst its crew - who failed to cooperate when they realised what was happening. Despite great heroism, the landing was an utter failure, until nightfall exposed the numerical weakness of the Turks and allowed the British troops to get ashore in numbers. Even so the last Turkish coastal defences were not over-run until the early afternoon of 26 April.

Throughout the landings, there had been appalling difficulties of command and control. Obsessions over imagined hordes of Turks constrained their movements. Senior commanders were also hampered by the culture within the British Army of deferring to 'the man on the spot' - even when it was clear that the man in question had no knowledge of the wider picture. Ship-to-shore communications broke down and staff procedures collapsed as inexperienced officers lost all control. There was no sense of combined purpose; each of the beach landings was fought as a separate operation with no effective cooperation between them to assist each other when things went wrong. Any fleeting opportunities while the Turkish opposition was still negligible were missed. Delays multiplied and the time wasted allowed the Turkish high command to assess the situation and despatch reinforcements to the key points. The much-vaunted demonstrations at Bulair and Besika Bay failed to divert any serious attention.



Map 3.3 The General ANZAC and Ottoman Lines Throughout Campaign

3.4 Dead French soldiers and wrecked transport at Cape Helles © IWM

Even when the 29th Division was at last ashore at Helles, there could be no bold thrust for Achi Baba. Instead a necessary period of reorganisation and consolidation followed, as they strove to array themselves without the benefit of any port facilities. Early on, the French 1st Division, CEO was retrieved from the landing at Kum Kale and added to the forces at Helles. Only on 28 April, did the Allies finally begin to press forward on Achi Baba, carrying out an advance to contact during the First Battle of Krithia. Progress soon stalled when contact was achieved - and then for awhile utter defeat threatened, as strong Turkish night attacks were launched by their fresh reserves on 1 and 3 May. The Turkish tactics were crude: rushing forward en masse, they attacked in the dark to avoid being flayed by the guns of the fleet. The slaughter was immense and the casualties suffered forced the Turks back to a largely defensive posture at Helles.

Desperate to get his stalled campaign moving, Hamilton brought in his reserves and sanctioned a series of attacks which

3.5 General Sir Ian Hamilton inspects the Howe Battalion of the 2nd Royal Naval Brigade, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Collins, at Kephalos Camp, Imbros, 18 June 1915 © IWM

5are collectively known as the Second Battle of Krithia on 6, 7 and 8 May. The Turks were still not properly dug in, occupying only a string of outposts and unconnected defensive positions. It proved more than enough. Every time the Allied troops felt their way forward they came under a scything fire. Both the 42nd Division and RND betrayed their lack of experience in these attacks. Some 6,500 casualties were suffered for the gain of at most 600 metres. It was a disaster.

Hamilton was forced to appeal, cap in hand, to Kitchener for more troops. The pattern of the Gallipoli campaign at Helles had been established. Hamilton was in a cleft stick: if he waited for more reinforcements then matching Turkish reinforcements would arrive and - worse still - in the time that passed the Turkish trench lines would grow ever stronger, criss-crossing the Peninsula. But if Hamilton took a chance and attacked before reinforcements arrived, then failure beckoned. And all the time, the pernicious effects of dysentery and a cocktail of diseases further eroded the strength of the MEF.

The British artillery situation was dire. They had far too few guns with almost no howitzers, and a crippling shortage of ammunition - particularly the all important H.E shells[1] so necessary to destroy trenches. The ground configuration at both Helles and Anzac did not help as it rendered near useless the flat trajectory of the supporting naval ordnance. The only saving grace was the Turks seemed equally short of both guns and ammunition. Only the French were properly provided with both guns and shells.

By early-June 1915, Hamilton was faced with three lines of Turkish trenches snaking across Helles. His response was to employ the new assault tactics developed on the Western Front in the Third Battle of Krithia on 4 June. Essentially, this was a matter of 'bite and hold', to try and seize the three Turkish lines

3.6 A French officer, acting as horse-borne dispatch rider at Cape Helles. In the background, French colonial troops with their mules © IWM

prior to the next assault on Achi Baba itself. By this time Kilid Bahr was all but forgotten; the Allied high command was now fixated on Achi Baba.

The Third Battle of Krithia saw some successes as both 42nd Division and RND showed a much improved performance. However on the right the French CEO, now augmented by the 2nd Division, met with disaster. The French faced an impossible tactical situation: harassed by fire from the batteries across the Straits, attacking a group of formidable redoubts clustered on the Kereves Spur and restricted further by the deep chasm of the Kereves Dere. Their understandable failure opened up the right flank of the RND and the 42nd Division to Turkish counter-attacks which regained much of the ground they had lost. Indeed, the Turks appeared to be about to achieve a breakthrough themselves before the front once more stabilised into stalemate. As on the Western Front, it was evident that although both sides could break in to enemy positions, they could not break through.

The failure of Third Krithia led to a more refined versions of 'bite and hold' with a series of attacks on a very localised frontage at Helles to allow the maximum concentration of guns. Some success was achieved, but the dreadful shortage of shells proved an enduring handicap to the British. This was inevitable given the overall state of the British munitions industry and the priority given to the BEF on the Western Front. By late-July it was abundantly clear that there would be no breakthrough at Helles.

Hamilton had requested substantial reinforcements on 17 May, but the new Coalition Government and the reconstitution of the War Council as the Dardanelles Committee caused a considerable delays. When the committee finally met on 7 June, it was agreed that three more divisions should be sent: the 10th, 11th and 13th Divisions from Kitchener's 'New Army'. When it was appreciated that the MEF had already been eroded to such an extent that these would merely restore the original strength, it was agreed in addition to send the 53rd and 54th Territorial Divisions. Once again no proper consideration was taken of the situation on the Western Front, the poor state of training and leadership endemic in these formations or the continuing crippling shortages of both artillery and shells.

The Second Phase

The second phase of the Gallipoli campaign evinced the same lack of tactical realism that had been the hallmark of the initial landings on 25 April. Hamilton's plans were again marked by numerous diversions amidst a complex scheme that demanded success from separate operations which could not support each other. First there would be two main diversionary attacks on 6 August: one by the VIII Corps at Helles, and the second by the 1st Australian Division at Lone Pine on the right flank of Anzac. That night, two assaulting columns would march north from Anzac. After the Turkish outposts had been dealt with by covering forces, the New Zealand Brigade would climb up

3.7 Royal Fusiliers returning from the trenches through Gully Ravine, Cape Helles, Gallipoli, 1915 © IWM

Rhododendron Ridge onto Chunuk Bair behind the Turkish lines. They would then drive down into the rear of the Turkish trenches in conjunction with a frontal attack by the Australian Light Horse Brigade across the Nek timed for 04.30 on 7 August. The second assaulting column would move further along the coast before the 4th Australian Brigade would move inland and ascend onto Hill 971 the highest point of the Sari Bair Ridge. This plan for a night attack across the some of the most tortuous terrain in the Peninsula by a combination of exhausted veterans and untried troops relied on wish-fulfilment rather than any realistic assessment of what was possible: once again the Turkish military prowess was disregarded. What they would do next had they somehow succeeded had barely even been considered.

Simultaneously, Hamilton planned a new landing in the Suvla Bay area. The IX Corps would land on the beaches on the night of 6 August and then rapidly move inland to seize first the foothills and then the commanding heights of Kiretch Tepe and Tekke Tepe that dominated the Suvla Plain. This was intended to establish a safe base for future operations. Then, if the situation permitted, they were to assist in the Anzac Corps operations up on Sari Bair Ridge. Unfortunately, Hamilton intervened to deprive Lieutenant General Sir Bryan Mahon (already present commanding the 10th Division) of the chance to take command of the IX Corps. He requested a young corps commander with Western Front experience, but this was impossible. The only available general of sufficient seniority to outrank Mahon was Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Stopford - a man in poor health, semi-retired and acting as Governor of the Tower of London. This would prove a truly disastrous choice. The original Hamilton plan was watered down by Stopford, who feared the consequences of advancing inland without proper artillery support. Soon the concept of a 'rush' for the hills had disappeared - Stopford was far more interested in establishing a base and seemed not to understand that it could not be secure without control of the surrounding heights. Hamilton failed to exert any grip on Stopford who was allowed to drift unchecked.

Hamilton also planned a diversion by the VIII Corps to 'pin' the Turkish forces at Helles. In consequence, a suicidal frontal attack was launched on 6-7 August at a cost of nearly 2,000 casualties. The Turks not only held them back with ease, but were still able to send reinforcements to assist at Anzac. Then it was the turn of the Australian 1st Division which launched a heroic assault across the bare No Man's Land between the trenches at Lone Pine to draw Turkish attention to the south side of Anzac. For three days the fighting raged, but the ground gained was negligible, and as a diversion it was only partially successful, after all south Anzac was only a couple kilometres from the focus of the attacks at Chunuk Bair.

The main assault forces began to creep out of Anzac at 21.00 on 6 August. The Turkish outposts were easily over-run, but then everything went wrong: the 4th Australian Brigade and 29th Indian Brigade were lost, harassed by Turkish snipers, failing to locate the intended route in a maze of gullies and ridges. When dawn broke they were still in the foothills and nowhere near their objective on the commanding heights of Hill 971. The New Zealand Brigade also got first lost and then hopelessly behind schedule, as they advanced up Rhododendron Ridge to Chunuk Bair. As such they were unable to launch the attack planned for 04.30 in concert with the Australian Light Horse Brigade at the Nek. Without them the men of the Light Horse were doomed, yet failures in command and control meant that they still went over the top into legend. By the time the New Zealanders reached Chunuk Bair it was far too late - the Turks were there in sufficient strength to stop them in their tracks. Hamilton's over-ambitious plans had fallen to pieces in the face of impossible terrain, determined Turkish resistance and his own exhausted troops.

3.8 Troops Landing on C Beach, Suvla Bay, Later in the Day, 7 August 1915 - Norman Wilkinson © IWM

3.9 Panoramic view of Ocean Beach, north of Ari Burnu and Anzac Cove, looking towards Suvla Bay. In the foreground is No. 1 Australian Hospital, in the centre are the Ordnance and Supply Stores, and in the distance No. 13 Casualty Clearing Station © IWM

The fighting would carry on for three days. True, for brief moments Chunuk Bair and the neighbouring Hill Q were occupied, but the reality is plain: these were isolated positions, occupied by small bodies of troops, cruelly exposed to flanking fire and facing superior Turkish forces. All hope was ended with the dawn counter-attack led by Colonel Mustafa Kemal at 04.45 on 10 August which cleared the British back from the heights. The August Anzac offensive had been a total failure.

Suvla Bay

The Suvla landings started well as two brigades of the 11th Division got ashore unopposed from their new armoured lighters on the B and C beaches south of Nibrunesi Point. However within Suvla Bay, at A Beach, the army had ignored specialist advice from the Royal Navy as to the likely presence of shoals. The deeper draught of the armoured lighters caused them to run aground in the shoaling waters - leaving most of a brigade trapped up to 200 yards offshore. Although they eventually got ashore, much time was wasted.

The operations at Suvla over the next few days were marked by a total failure of command and control at every level. Events were marked by orders, counter-orders and resultant disorder. Senior officers shirked responsibility, fearing the consequences of mistakes and thereby committed the greatest mistake of all by doing nothing. Instead of capturing the commanding heights of Kiretch Tepe and Tekke Tepe, they were unable to press forward beyond the very lowest foothills. Callow troops were hamstrung by poor leadership, poor communications, a total lack of military experience, a debilitating shortage of water; and most of all by the skilful defence of the Turks. Under the command of Major Wilhelm Willmer a force of just four battalions and a few field guns held back the whole IX Corps. Turks in carefully sited outposts culled the slowly advancing British, firing until the last moment, before melting away into the scrub ready to fight again. Meanwhile, the Turkish reserves of the 7th and 12th Divisions were on the march from the Bulair Isthmus. The British were in a race against time, but they didn't seem to know, or care.

By the time Hamilton lifted his eyes from the chaos of the Anzac offensive it was already too late - the Suvla operations wnzac already collapsing into oblivion. Hamilton ordered an immediate attack at dawn on 9 August, but it was already too late and his advancing troops were overwhelmed by a furious Turkish counter-attack sweeping down and around them. By this time the Suvla operations were effectively over: the Turks would control the hills. Still Hamilton fought on, deploying first the 53rd Division, then the 54th Division, then 10th Division in desperate assaults that had little chance of success and duly failed.

Stopford and many of his subordinate generals were dismissed and Major General Beauvoir de Lisle was temporarily moved from the 29th Division to command the staggering IX Corps. Despite the evidence of defeat all around him, de Lisle managed to convince himself that with the arrival of the 29th Division shipped over from Helles, coupled with the arrival of the dismounted Yeomanry of 2nd Mounted Division, was enough to permit him one last gamble. The resulting Battle of 21 August was to be the largest engagement in the whole Gallipoli campaign, but it was little more than a futile squabble over the foothills. The conclusion was certain from the outset: this was a truly pointless battle and nothing whatsoever was achieved by the British for the price of 5,300 casualties.

3.10 A British field kitchen at Suvla Bay © IWM

3.11 FM Lord Kitchener at Suvla Bay on Karakol Dagh, looking towards the Salt Lake, Koja Chemen Tepe and Chunuk Bair with General William Birdwood 13 November 1915 © IWM

3.12 Loaded 'Beetles' in the harbour at 'A' West Beach, Suvla Point, twenty-four hours before the departure on 19 December 1915 © IWM

Withdrawal

In effect the Gallipoli campaign was over after the debacle on 21 August. There would be aftershocks, but the reality of defeat stared Hamilton and the MEF in the face. The Turks sat on the hills above the Allied lines at Helles, Anzac and Suvla, from there they could look down in total control of the situation. But still Hamilton refused to accept defeat. The French began to drift away, scenting defeat and preferring to devote their resources to the Salonika campaign that was triggered when the Bulgarians entered the war on the side of the Central Powers in September 1915. The nearest source of troops was Gallipoli and MEF was soon stripped of both the French 2nd Division and the 10th Division.

When Hamilton still proved adamant that he would not even consider the possibility of evacuation, he was summarily dismissed on 14 October. His replacement was Lieutenant General Sir Charles Monro. This veteran of the Western Front visited the Gallipoli bridgeheads and was appalled by what he saw. He considered the tactical situation farcical, the logistical situation impossible. Monro recommended a swift evacuation, but Kitchener demurred, fearful of triggering a reaction to such a humiliating defeat by the Turks within the Muslim parts of the Empire. Kitchener came out to Gallipoli to see for himself in November, but he too was aghast and reluctantly recommended evacuation. Still the British government hesitated, fearing the casualties that might result from a botched evacuation, but in the end they had no choice but to acquiesce.

The final two-stage evacuation was conducted brilliantly. The staff planned with a marked attention to detail, exemplary innovation and a realistic approach to what was and wasn't possible. It was late in the day but at least staff functions were beginning to improve. First Anzac and Suvla were evacuated on 18-19 December, then the much more dangerous task of evacuating Helles was carried out under the very noses of the Turks on the night of 8-9 January 1916.

Commentary

Apologists for the Gallipoli campaign have long tried to boast of 'what could have been' with a heavy emphasis on 'if only'. This fails to recognise that the campaign was throughout resourced with the levels of naval and military support considered appropriate by local commanders - until the Turks defeated them. Time and time again Hamilton promised success; time and again he failed. Gallipoli was one of a series of military 'Easterner' adventures launched without proper consideration of the strategic or tactical situation, logistical realities, or the strength of the opposition.

Worst of all, Gallipoli drew vital resources from where it really mattered. Vital naval resources, in particular destroyer escorts, were stripped from Admiral Sir John Jellicoe whose Grand Fleet was facing the High Seas Fleet that could pick its moment to contest the ultimate control of the seas. On the Western Front the British and French were facing their 'real' enemy: the German Empire. Men, guns and munitions deployed on Gallipoli should have been deployed on the Western Front. There they would not have won the war, but they would have rendered the front more secure and allowed the potential for more successful operations to secure localised tactical objectives. This was the real war - Gallipoli was nothing but a foolish sideshow.

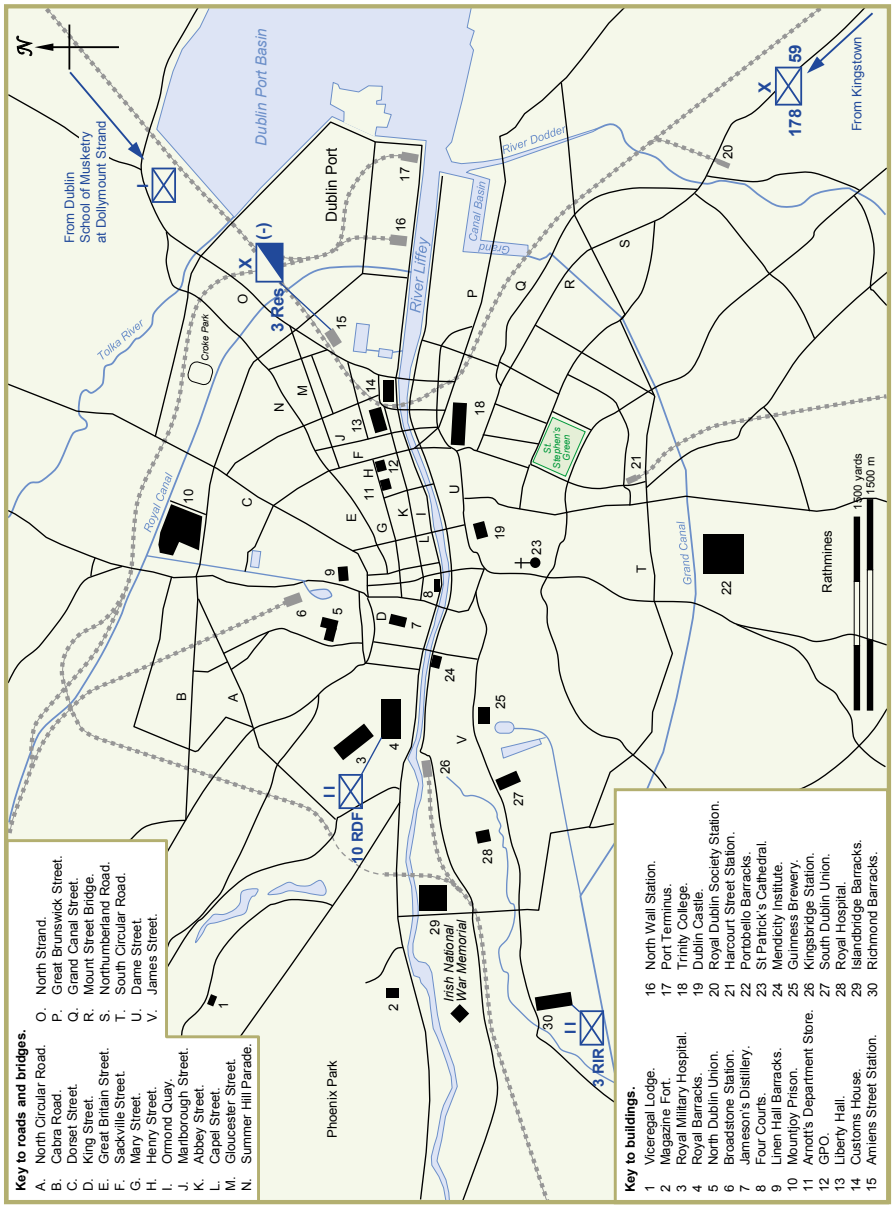
The Battlefield Today

The Gallipoli Peninsula is one of the most rewarding of battlefield tours. The ground is mostly unspoilt and the tactical realities of the campaign are laid out before you. The Dardanelles Straits, the objective of the campaign is still teeming with a procession of huge ships that, to the vivid imagination, can conjure up a picture of the Allied fleet in 1915. The importance of Kilid Bahr, in contrast to Achi Baba, is soon grasped: Kilid Bahr has a view totally dominating the Narrows; Achi Baba can look down only on Helles. The breathtaking vista bestowed on the Turks over the Allied lines from up on the hills of Anzac, Helles and Suvla is sobering. The remnants of piers still mark the open beaches that acted as the supply depots for whole army corps: unbelievably the whole logistical infra-structure was under the constant threat of Turkish shellfire. The tangled nature of the terrain, the blazing heat, the need for copious water - and yes the damned flies that caused the dysentery that enfeebled armies - these are all still evident. The carefully tended cemeteries and monuments that mark key points on the battlefield pay tribute to the men of both sides who fought and died there.

Endnotes

1. Much of the artillery ammunition was shrapnel. Shrapnel relied for its effect on the high velocity of scores of bullets released at a precise point on the trajectory by the action of a time fuze and a small bursting charge. At short ranges it was deadly but accuracy and effect fell away as the range increased. HE shell was more effective at destruction especially from larger guns. Although shrapnel enabled the infantry to follow the barrage more closely because the explosive effect was always forward. At this stage in the war bottlenecks in producing HE were due to difficulties in manufacturing fuzes and a satisfactory HE filling for the shell. Editor.

3.13 Ottoman Greek labourers employed by the Graves Registration Unit at the camp on Ocean Beach, Anzac. Walker's Ridge in background © IWM



Map 4.1 Dublin 1916

4. Rebellion in Ireland 1 The Easter Uprising 1916

Kevin Myers

The Historiographical Context

Any appreciation of the army's record in Ireland, 1916-22, must begin with the historiographical caveat that virtually all accounts of this period have been written by historians who in large part are sympathetic to the 'rebels' or the IRA, as they later became. Moreover, whereas many insurgents - sometimes it seems as if all of them - were keen to write their accounts of the time, which they duly did, from the British and Irish loyalist side there was mostly silence. The bitterness of a supposed defeat is the usual explanation for this reticence.

The author of the two Irish chapters in this volume would maintain that the British army did not lose either sector of the engagement, the 1916 Rising, or the insurgency of 1919-23. In strategic terms, namely the political and military interests of the United Kingdom, the army won both phases of the conflict, which it then proceeded to lose historiographically. This cultural defeat was in part because of the personal bitterness felt by many senior and middle-ranking army officers at the way the IRA conducted its war, in part because of the failure to win over the minds of their own population in Britain, and in part because subsequently they had other matters on their hands, while their opponents, not being so busy, had ample time to conjure what had actually been for them a strategic defeat into a victory. Paradoxically, most historians have concurred with the latter fantasy, which in a perverse way has - almost incredibly, despite the contrary evidence - petrified into a mental fact. Indeed, the word 'incredible' applies to much of what follows.

By late 1914, nationalist opinion - roughly speaking, that of the Catholic majority in the island - was largely pro-British and pro-war, especially since Home Rule for most of Ireland was on the statute books, and due to be implemented when war was over. However, that pro-Britishness was strictly conditional and permanently fragile. A tragic shooting by a company of 2nd Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers (KOSB) in July 1914, resulting in the deaths of four innocent civilians, was to exercise a long-term influence on both Irish nationalist opinion and British policy. Ulster loyalists had already imported guns in their opposition to All-Ireland Home Rule, secretly, and in the dead of night. Nationalists had responded likewise, but in broad daylight on a Sunday morning. A senior police officer, without consultation, enlisted the services of a company of 2 KOSB in a wholly illegal arrest-operation, which ended with rioting and the shootings on Bachelor's Walk on the north bank of the Liffey in central Dublin. This was not state policy, but clumsy zeal mixed with excessive personal anti-nationalism. The police officer responsible was forced to resign, and two KOSB officers, Haig and Cobden, were facing manslaughter charges, but their capture by the Germans in the opening days of the world war (the Battalion moved through Le Havre to join the BEF on 15 August 1914) prevented a public trial which might have lanced the boil of Irish suspicion about British intentions.

The Nature of British Rule and the Plot

This affair made the authorities in Dublin Castle, the centre of British administration in Ireland, extraordinarily reluctant to take pre-emptive action against anti-British, republican para-militarism, or even engage in simple intelligence duties. In 1915, MI5's postal censorship bureau in Britain employed nearly 1,500 people. In Ireland, it employed just ten. The supposedly fearsome Defence of the Realm Act Court was not military: hearings must be heard before a magistrate, who could only give six months imprisonment, or before a jury, which in Ireland would invariably acquit. Two solid cases of possession of explosives by known republicans had already been thrown out. Between August and November 1914, in time of war, one English arms-manufacturer had sold 900 rifles to the avowedly anti-British 'Irish Volunteers'. From August 5 1914, the ban on the importation of guns into Ireland had been removed. Under the Defence of the Realm act, a licence duty on arms was merely to be paid, and the Under-Secretary, Nathan, decided that it would be trifling for the state to try and exact duty on those who imported weapons in order to overthrow it. In other words, the state chose to be passively complicit in acts of defiance towards it, and thus effectively became party to the gradual unravelling of the rule of law. One hundred service rifles were stolen one night in Dublin in August 1915, and no serious attempt to recover them or investigate the theft was made, lest nationalist opinion be antagonised. And as for the minor matter of armed drilling, the only statute to prevent it dated from 1819 and had not been used in many decades.

The result was the triumph of what we might call The Bachelors' Walk Effect. This ruled that any attempt to defend the state against republican assault would by definition be counter-productive, serving instead to undermine its authority. What began as no more than a decent - if politically-abject local tactic then rapidly metamorphosed into a quite dysfunctional strategy for the entire island, which in its actual implication would allow uniformed enemies of the state, and avowed allies of Imperial Germany, to gather under arms everywhere, even up to the very gates of Dublin Castle, the heart of British administration in Ireland. The regularity of these unchecked exhibitions of armed dissent meant it would be possible to turn a display suddenly into an insurrection without arousing suspicion. Moreover, intelligence reports suggested that a rising was almost certain. One informer, a woman whose brothers were both Irish Volunteers, named 17 April 1916 as the date for it. No rising occurred on that day, but instead, Wimborne, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, received fresh intelligence that an arms

ship, accompanied by two submarines, would soon land at Kerry. This information was wrong by just one U-boat.

The complexity of the conspiracy behind the Rising is beyond our compass here. Suffice to say that the Irish Volunteers were controlled at the very top by a small secret, oath-bound group called the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). Most of those marching each Sunday would not have known this. When the leader of the Irish Volunteers (IV), Eoin MacNeill, discovered that the IRB planned to use his IV movement for a pro-German insurrection, he took out newspaper advertisements cancelling the Easter marches. The insurrectionary leader, Patrick Pearse, was able through his extensive IRB contacts and his personal influence to proceed with the insurrection, even though many of the participants were unaware that they were about to go to war with the British state. Paradoxically, MacNeill's public cancellation actually assisted the insurrection, because it put the Lord Lieutenant, Wimborne and Nathan at their ease.

Most bizarrely, even the Pope was allegedly aware that a rising - 'to create a Catholic state in Ireland' - was due, and even knew the date. His 'informant' was the Papal Count Plunkett, whose son was a central conspirator. However, since the Count, a vain and egotistical creature, is the sole source for this story, with Vatican files being as yet unforthcoming, it might be no more truthful than any other part of the Catholic-Republican mythology that still dominates the narrative of this time.

republican ambitions. It was to put the UK under major assault, east and west. In the North Sea, a major defeat might well be inflicted on the Royal Navy, while in Ireland, a new man-sapping front would be opened, possibly drawing the Army into the unspeakable horrors of a counter-insurgency campaign. The Irish conspirators fervently believed (because they had fervently told themselves so) that their Rising would cause a nation-wide insurrection and even a defection of Irish regiments in the British army. The implacable hostility of Ulster unionists to even moderate Irish nationalist aspirations seems not to have entered their calculations.

The shipment of guns and ammunition to the Irish Volunteers, if successfully completed, would have made them largest armed group in Ireland, twice the size of the Royal Irish Constabulary. With the exception of the 10th Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the capital, most army units remaining in the country were skeleton-service battalions of the Irish regiments, used for raising and training recruits, of which there were now very few. The three Irish divisions were now all at the front, including most of the loyalist militia, the Ulster Volunteer Force. Army headquarters in Kildare consisted merely of the 3rd Reserve Cavalry Brigade and 1,600 men of the Curragh Mobile Column. In essence, measured by rifles, this meant the insurgents nationally would have at least matched crown forces in strength, and more to the point, could locally have achieved overwhelming superiority. For relatively little investment, the Germans might thus have achieved

4.1 This Browning 1900 self-loading rifle was seized by British forces during the Irish Republican rising in Dublin at Easter 1916 © IWM

The German navy, being central to the planning of their entire affair, provided key elements to the rebellion: the dispatch of a small party of Irish republicans, led by Sir Roger Casement, from Wilhelmshaven by submarine and a shipment of 20,000 captured Russian Mosin-Nagant rifles, ten machine guns, one million rounds of ammunition and explosives, to County Kerry, on the west coast of Ireland. However, Room 40 of Naval Intelligence had broken the German codes and so knew about the weapons and of the imminence of the Rising - but inexplicably did not inform the Government of Ireland - namely, the Viceroy Lord Wimborne, and the First Secretary, Burrell. Room 40 was also aware of intended Kriegsmarine movements in the North Sea, and their probable intention - an attack on Britain's east coast, though - initially, anyway - without knowing that the targets were to be the East Anglian towns of Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth.

The failure of the larger German strategy that weekend has caused historians not to grasp the scale of German and Irish strategic victories in the North Sea and on Britain's western flank. Room 40 was the rock on which these vast ambitions foundered.

Aware that any German coastal bombardment was intended as a lure to engage and destroy as many British vessels as possible, that long Easter weekend the Admiralty deployed the Grand Fleet, the Battle Cruiser Fleet and Commodore Tyrett's Harwich Force, with caution. Moreover, the German force was weakened by the mining and crippling of Rear Admiral Boedicker's flagship, SMS *Seydlitz*, causing the commander to switch his flag. Boedicker - a replacement for the far more aggressive Hipper, who was unwell - then conducted operations with a caution that undermined their very purpose, namely to bring the Royal Navy to action in conditions that most suited the Germans. The bombardments of the two towns caused a handful of wounded, and three deaths, but not the hundreds that had been inflicted on Scarborough in December 1914. Boedicker's force returned to its base in The Jade with just a couple of minor engagements.

4.2 Machine gun section, 2nd/6th Battalion, Sherwood Foresters, in Cassiobury Park, Watford, shortly before leaving for Dublin © IWM

Meanwhile, the Germany's plan to arm the Irish Volunteers also failed completely. The weapons-smuggling vessel, disguised as the Norwegian merchantman the Aud, bizarrely had no radio and was unable to communicate with the Irish Volunteers. She was surrounded by Royal Naval vessels off the south-west coast and scuttled by its crew, along with all its munitions. Meanwhile, Casement and his party were landed by submarine in Kerry and promptly captured. Yet despite this evidence of events moving to a crisis, the army's GOC in Ireland, Major General Friend left for London on the evening of Friday 21 April. The regional Admiral (Queenstown) had already told the army that an arms shipment would be a precursor to a Rising, so this departure of the key military figure in Ireland has hitherto defied rational analysis.

There are two reasons for Friend's action. One was that the failure of the arms shipment suggested that no insurrection would then occur. The second has hitherto escaped comment. It was that April 25th would be Friend's 50th birthday, which he apparently was anxious to celebrate at home, rather than in a land that he - like virtually everyone in government in Ireland - so cordially detested. The Lord Lieutenant, Lord Wimborne, was powerless to stop him. Although on the Army List for the Irish Command, Wimborne lacked both rank and uniform, and had no military authority over Friend's movements. Indeed, this disconnect typifies a parallel and dysfunctional command structure within the governance of Ireland. Thus it was that the Admiral (Queenstown) had not even informed Wimborne directly of the Kerry conspiracy, which the Lord Lieutenant only learned about, almost accidentally, from General Stafford, the admiral's army colleague at Queenstown. The Chief Secretary, Birrell, loathed Ireland and not visited it in two months, while the military despised his deputy, Nathan, a querulous, craven creature, who was in permanent thrall to the Bachelor's Walk Effect.

That weekend, the signs were ominous. On Easter Saturday, as one well-known republican lugged six rifles and four revolvers passed a group of constables of the Dublin Metropolitan Police (an unarmed force), one of them quipped: "Well James, you are going to have a great field day today." Police intelligence later reported that 250 pounds of stolen gelignite had been moved to Liberty Hall, the republican paramilitary headquarters, where armed men maintained an almost permanent presence. When on Sunday (Easter Day) evening the Viceroy met Colonel Cowen, standing in for Friend, they discussed arresting the republican ringleaders and seizing the gelignite. One bizarre but decisively influential military opinion was that a pre-emptive operation to raid Liberty Hall would require field-guns. However, the nearest available pieces were in Athlone, three to four hours away, and therefore could not be got that night. Wimborne signed the arrest warrants for the republican ringleaders, but without instigating immediate measure to implement the arrests. And then, incredibly, everyone went to bed.

The Uprising

The next morning, Easter Monday 24 April, Burrell sent a ciphered telegram from London, authorising arrests. At 10.00, Lord Wimborne learnt that one of Casement's Party had admitted that a rising was planned for that day, with Dublin Castle a first objective. However, and at Nathan's specific insistence, incredibly again, no extra men were posted around the Castle, the front-gate of which was guarded by one unarmed constable. Even though there was a permanent picquet of 600 British soldiers on standby in the city's three main barracks, no pre-emptive measures were taken to guard vital strategic positions - the castle itself, communications centres including the GPO, and the main bridges across the Liffey. By 12.30, Wimborne had still taken no action, but was writing to the Prime Minister when he received a message that Dublin Castle had been attacked,

the GPO had been seized, St Stephen's Green occupied and insurgents were marching towards the vice-regal lodge. Only the last bit was untrue.

All over Dublin, armed republicans had moved to various key-locations (and such uniforms as they had were bizarrely un-uniform: some even included boy-scouts' attire bought in Arnott's department store shortly beforehand). Their operational HQ was the GPO in Sackville (now O'Connell) Street, and civilians who objected to the sight of armed men taking over public buildings or who ignored armed insurgents' orders were hit with rifle butts or even shot. The first member of the security forces to be killed was the hapless and unarmed DMP man Constable O'Brien, shot as he stood alone outside the Castle gates. Apparently appalled, his killers hastily retreated, and took over the offices of The Daily Express directly opposite the Castle gates. Other insurgents seized strategically important buildings along the line of the River Liffey that runs east-west through the city. One complex that was turned into an insurgent strongpoint, and in direct contravention of the First Principle of the Geneva Convention of War, was the women's hospital of the South Dublin Union, (the poor house).

These initial operations occurred shortly after 12.00. The first report from the police to the army, at around 12.15, was that Dublin Castle was under attack. The Dublin Garrison Adjutant, on his own initiative - almost predictably, both Colonel Cowan and the CO of the Dublin Garrison, Lieutenant Colonel Kennard were out of their offices - ordered troops from the three main barracks in the city to proceed immediately to Dublin Castle. The army's ration-strength in the city was 35 officers and 851 men of the 6th Reserve Cavalry regiment and 76 officers and 1065 men of three Irish infantry regiments, the Royal Irish Rifles, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the Royal Irish Regiment.

At 12.30, Brigadier-General W. H. M. Lowe, commanding the Reserve Cavalry Brigade at the Curragh, was told by phone - the rebels had managed to disconnect the telegraph lines, but not all the phone lines - to dispatch the Mobile Column on trains that were at that moment being sent from Dublin. That these trains and their crews could be made ready at such short notice on an Easter Monday bespeaks a level of preparedness that is explained in neither contemporary nor subsequent official accounts, providing another little mystery that is unlikely now to be satisfactorily explained.

So, it is entirely in keeping with an account that has so many lacunae that if Brigadier-General Lowe in the Curragh, and now in charge of taking on the Dublin insurgents, wrote any plan of campaign that day, it has since vanished. So too have his subsequent orders, and so too has any earlier contingency plan. Our knowledge of all this might have been enhanced by Lowe's evidence before the Royal Commission into the Rising, but he was not called. It is almost as if the British were creating a vacuum for the insurgents' narrative to fill.

With the cross-channel telegraphs down, communications with Britain were re-established by radio-link from Kingstown (now Dun Laoghaire), and later that day, 59th Division in St Albans was ordered to proceed to Ireland. That it was able to do so, with much of its impedimenta, in the opposite direction than expected, reflects well on the planning and flexibility of the Army Service Corps (ASC), suggesting that some useful stowage lessons had been learnt in the Gallipoli campaign.

Events in Dublin had proceeded apace. The first troops to respond to the insurrection were in Royal Barracks on the Liffey, where the men were training in trench warfare. Some 500 men of the 10th Royal Dublin Fusiliers formed in fours and marched out onto the quayside, heading for the Castle about a mile away. This was precisely what the insurgents had expected. Snipers in the Mendicity Institute - yet another poor house - opened fire as they left the barracks. One of the first casualties was Pte Francis Brennan, shot dead one hundred yards from his home.

4.3 Guarded by British troops, an arrested Irish republican is marched across a bridge following the Easter Rising in Dublin in April 1916 © IWM

(Irish accounts of the street battles of 1916 usually refer to the 'Tommies' or the 'British' opposing the insurgents: whereas, at this stage, these 'British' soldiers were almost all Irish).

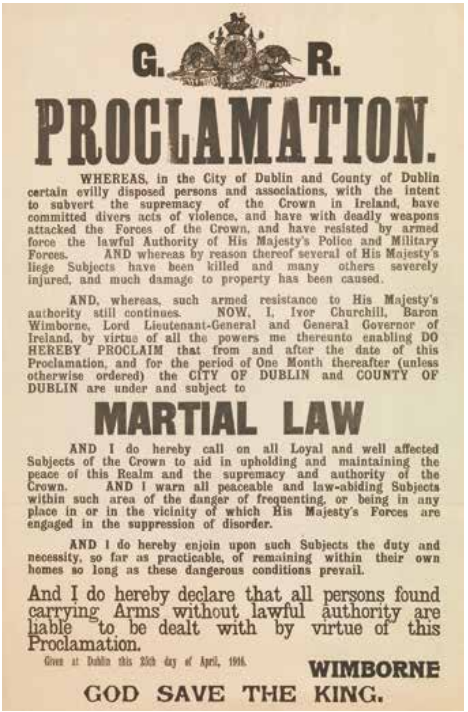
The Dublin Fusiliers scattered under the enemy sniper-fire, and aided by the tenement poor, many of whose menfolk were in the colours and who eagerly pointed out the rebels' positions, made their own way in groups towards Dublin Castle. This they soon secured. Other rebel groups had taken St Stephen's Green, a park about a mile from Dublin Castle, where one of their leaders, the self-styled countess (she was no such thing) Constance Markievitz, summarily murdered an unarmed police officer, Michael Lahiffe. A second constable was shot and wounded, and later died of his injuries.

The 3rd Royal Irish Regiment (RIR) left Richmond Barracks to relieve the Castle. Insurgents in the poor-house women's hospital in the South Dublin Union opened fire on them. Neither the patients nor the nurses had been evacuated: three of the inmates were killed in the exchanges that followed. In the nationalist narrative that emerged, responsibility for their deaths were placed firmly on the 'British', even though the insurgents had militarised a hospital, and the soldiers themselves were Irish. The Royal Irish casualties were heavy: seven dead and seven wounded. After taking and holding much of the Union for the night, 3rd RIR were ordered to evacuate it and reinforce Kingsbridge Station. They did so under protest. Unsecured, the Union was then retaken by insurgents.

Perhaps there was justification for putting troops into Kingsbridge. Rebel attacks on the city's communication network were continuing. Army command had no way of knowing if a secondary insurrection was planned. Kingsbridge, alongside the Liffey, provided the main link with the Curragh and the western part of the city, but also - through the underground loop line, to Amiens Street Station on the eastern edge, also on the Liffey, just beside Dublin port. That the rebels had left this vital east-west underground corridor open bespeaks a chronic lack of military vision.

At 1645 hrs that first afternoon, the first elements of the Curragh Mobile Column under Colonel Portal arrived by train at Kingsbridge Station. By 17.20, the entire column of 1,600 officers and men had arrived in the city, with one train taking reinforcements through the loopline to Amiens Street on the east of the city, beside Dublin Port. This vital strategic hub was secured by the Curragh cavalrymen, and by men of Dublin's Musketry School from Dollymount Strand nearby. Colonel Portal was presumably following Lowe's orders, as over the next twenty hours he established a series of military strongpoint almost in a straight line from the station to Dublin Castle and Trinity College. The army's division of the city was completed by 12.00 on the Tuesday 25 April, precisely 24 hours after the insurgency had erupted.

Meanwhile, other buildings were being recaptured: the westernmost objective of the rebels, and like so many others, overlooking the Liffey, was the Phoenix Park magazine, the scene of the cold blooded murder by the insurgents of the son of an army officer. This was soon recaptured. Communications were



G. R.

PROCLAMATION.

WHEREAS, in the City of Dublin and County of Dublin certain evilly disposed persons and associations, with the intent to subvert the supremacy of the Crown in Ireland, have committed divers acts of violence, and have with deadly weapons attacked the Forces of the Crown, and have resisted by armed force the lawful Authority of His Majesty's Police and Military Forces. AND whereas by reason thereof several of His Majesty's liege Subjects have been killed and many others severely injured, and much damage to property has been caused.

AND, whereas, such armed resistance to His Majesty's authority still continues. NOW, I, Ivor Churchill, Baron Wimborne, Lord Lieutenant-General and General Governor of Ireland, by virtue of all the powers me thereunto enabling DO HEREBY PROCLAIM that from and after the date of this Proclamation, and for the period of One Month thereafter (unless otherwise ordered) the CITY OF DUBLIN and COUNTY OF DUBLIN are under and subject to

MARTIAL LAW

AND I do hereby call on all Loyal and well affected Subjects of the Crown to aid in upholding and maintaining the peace of this Realm and the supremacy and authority of the Crown. AND I warn all peaceable and law-abiding Subjects within such area of the danger of frequenting, or being in any place in or in the vicinity of which His Majesty's Forces are engaged in the suppression of disorder.

AND I do hereby enjoin upon such Subjects the duty and necessity, so far as practicable, of remaining within their own homes so long as these dangerous conditions prevail.

And I do hereby declare that all persons found carrying Arms without lawful authority are liable to be dealt with by virtue of this Proclamation.

Given at Dublin this 25th day of April, 1916.

WIMBORNE

GOD SAVE THE KING.

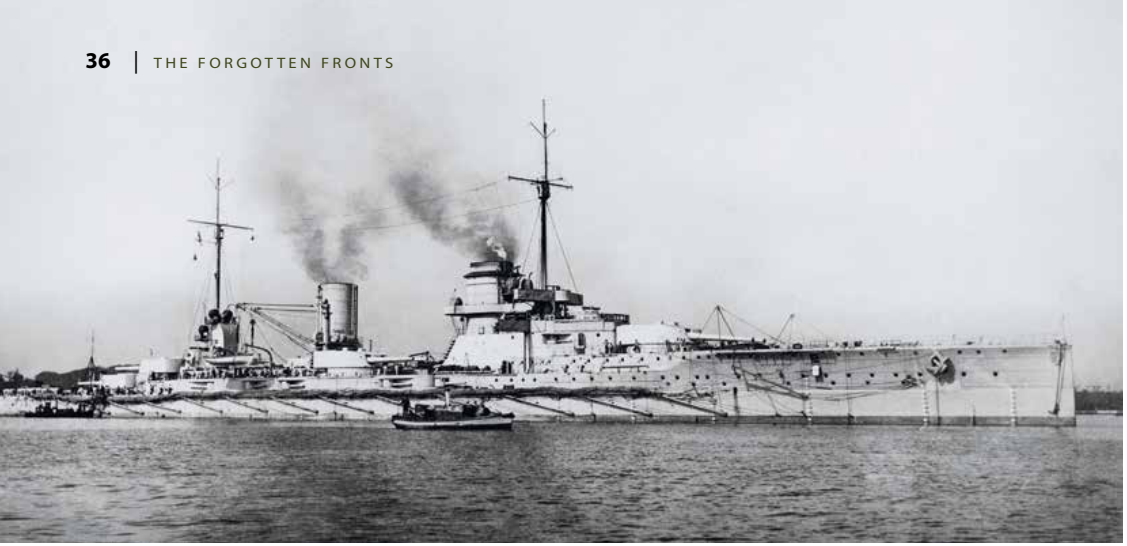
4.4 Proclamation - Martial Law © IWM

established with other army establishments via the Curragh, enabling the 4th Dublin Fusiliers to be sent from Templemore, County Tipperary, to Kingsbridge, and the four 18-pounders from Athlone, which had been the subject of the feverishly indecisive consultations in the Viceroy's lodge on Easter Sunday night. One of them was swiftly used to blow apart an enemy barricade threatening the vital rail loopline. A brilliant assault by Dublin Fusiliers under 2nd Lieutenant Frederick O'Neill retook the offices of The Daily Express.

The rebels had in the early minutes of the rising slaughtered some elderly unarmed ex-servicemen as they crossed Mount Street Bridge, south of the city-centre, after a 'route-march'. In the chaos, General Lowe seems not to have known Mount Street Bridge, carrying one of the main roads linking with Kingstown ferry-port, was a dangerous choke-point. Either way, it surely would have been more sensible to send troops directly to Dublin port, in whose larger perimeter lay Amiens Street station. Instead, the Kingstown option was taken, presumably because that was the ferry company's usual route.

Reinforcement

On the evening of 25 April, two columns of the 178th Infantry Brigade marched from the port (where they disembarked after their journey from St Albans) for Dublin. The left, containing the 5th and 6th Sherwood Foresters, took a parallel route to



4.5 SMS *Seydlitz*, May 1914 © IWM

Mount Street and arrived safely. The right column, the 7th and 8th Sherwood Foresters, took the Mount Street route. Heavy casualties were soon inflicted by snipers who had had over a day to make loopholes and to sandbag windows. Recent tests by the Irish Army indicate that a single republican, Lt Michael Malone, might have had a wholly disproportionate effect on events at the bridge. Armed with an ideal street-fighting weapon, a Mauser 7.65mm Parabellum pistol mounted on a shoulder-stock, and positioned above and obliquely to the advancing soldiers, with a ten-round magazine he would have been able to put down a formidable field of rapid fire while remaining completely invisible. Even the act of putting in a fresh magazine automatically places one round in the chamber. With this weapon, even a poor shot (as this author can testify) could achieve deadly accuracy at well over one hundred meters, and Malone was the best shot in his unit. He probably fatally accounted for the Forester's adjutant, Captain Deitrichsen - who not long before had briefly and tearfully met his Irish wife and their children at Kingstown - and severely wounded the CO, Lt Colonel Fane, who though with a shattered arm, remained on duty. Clearly unaware of the strength of the enemy positions, Brigadier-General Lowe sent orders insisting that the Foresters continue their advance into the city centre. In the ensuing assaults, the battalion lost twenty two officers and two hundred and sixteen men killed and wounded. The 5th South Staffordshire, 176th Infantry Brigade, were then sent to reinforce the beleaguered Foresters.

In the city centre, an attempt to retake Jameson's whiskey-distillery came to a similarly melancholy end. The distillery, a huge cut-stone building, was charged by cavalry - an extraordinary choice of arm for fighting along small cobbled streets - with entirely predictable results: heavy losses, in both men and mounts.

Liberty Hall, the original epicentre of the rebellion, was now being shelled by indirect fire from the fisheries patrol vessel the *Helga*, and the Athlone field guns. Fires began to spread down Sackville/O'Connell Street.

Meanwhile, on the morning of 25 April, his birthday, General Friend had returned directly by destroyer to the port of Dublin - the very option not offered to the Sherwood Foresters - and that day the Lord Lieutenant, Wimborne declared martial law, but without consulting his attorney-general. It is unlikely that he had the least idea of what powers he was delegating to ordinary soldiers, who were already fighting a war for which they had received absolutely no training. Even their officers had no real knowledge of the legal limitations contained within the term, 'martial-law.' It certainly did not mean the right of summary-execution, which it nonetheless became in the minds of certain soldiers.

Portal's improvised brigade of 5th Leinsters, 3rd Royal Irish Regiment, 2/6 Foresters and a composite 'Ulster' battalion, that same day completed the isolation of the rebel garrison in the GPO. It was an irony that the GPO's military commandant, James Connolly, was around this time shot by a Royal Irish sniper under the command of Major Morragh, whose father had been a Home Rule MP for Cork. Yet though Friend was now back, his subordinate Lowe remained in charge - an unhelpful duality which probably militated against the one quality necessary in siege-warfare: patience. The man who might have imposed his experience on affairs, Wimborne, had hit the bottle in his home in Phoenix Park.

The cabinet in London later that day extended Wimborne's declaration of martial law in Dublin to the whole island. This has puzzled some historians. It should not. The cabinet was aware of its own earlier failures to act on intelligence in Ireland, and it had no intention of being caught short again. That morning, the expected German naval attack on East Anglia had begun. The cabinet would have been deeply aware that the bombardment of the North East in December 1914 had not merely caused some 137 deaths and over five hundred wounded, but a huge uproar over the Royal Navy's failure to hunt down and destroy the attacking force. Comparable casualties this time would have obliged the Navy to abandon all caution, and no-one at that point could have seen that this latest assault would be a failure. Meanwhile, was there another German move against Ireland in the offing, but one undetected by Room 40? Britain's strategic needs compelled caution.

Nonetheless, the extension of martial law over the entire island, most of which remained peaceful throughout this period, gave the appearance to many Irish nationalists of foreign rule, imposed by might. The insurgents were thus achieving their ends by other means - and the strategy of provoking the state into taking actions that alienated the hitherto uninvolved was born for the next phase of the Irish war.

Tragedies

That Easter Tuesday night, with looters everywhere and much of the city in flames, another tragedy was in the making. Captain J C Bowen Colthurst, a dangerously headstrong thirty five year old Irish officer of the Royal Irish Rifles, had been posted back from the Front to permanent training duties. His modest rank two years into the war is probably a fair reflection of his abilities. His personal file contained the earnest recommendation from a former CO in France 'that this officer never be allowed to command men in action again.'

Events now had conspired to give him what he was least suited for. Most writers on this affair follow the theory that Colthurst was representative of an officer class that tolerated or even encouraged his atrocities and then conspired to protect him. The simpler truth - that he was mad and out of control in precisely the situation he should never have been allowed near - is seldom accepted. And this is primarily relevant because the real terrain on which the rising came to be fought was not in the streets of Dublin, but in the narrative that followed.

On Easter Tuesday Bowen Colthurst repeatedly led patrols around the Rathmines area of Dublin. That evening, he encountered a 17-year youth called Coade who had earlier left a religious meeting, and shot him dead. He later killed a man named Kelly. He arrested two men, Dickson and McIntyre, who were dining privately at their home. A third man, Sheehy Skeffington - a Dublin eccentric, feminist, and Sinn Fein pacifist - had already been taken into custody, for no very good reason other than that the martial law declaration made it possible. The three men were being held in the guard-room at Portobello Barracks. The next morning, Bowen Colthurst decided that they should be shot, and gave orders accordingly.

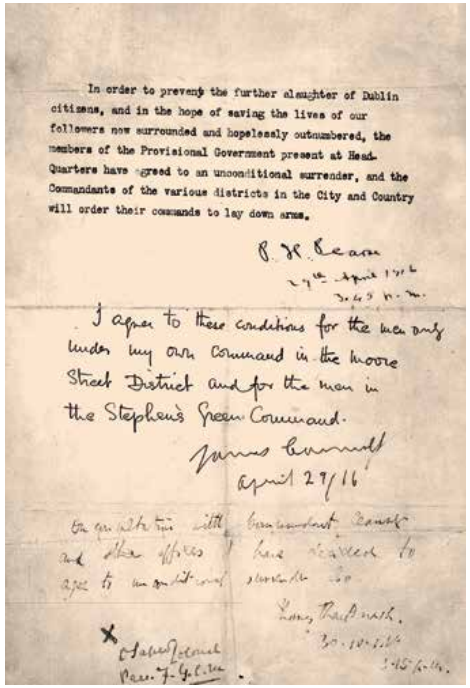
The narrative that has emerged - endorsed by most historians - is that other British officers in Portobello could and should have stopped Colthurst and didn't. Well, they tried. The duty adjutant, Lieutenant S V Morgan, was a working class Catholic from near Belfast, who had been commissioned from the ranks. The two subalterns in the guard room, Lieutenant A Wilson and Lieutenant W Dobbin, were both Irish, both aged 18, and just out of school (and Wilson's home was just five hundred yards from the barracks). Colthurst was almost everything they weren't: son of the landed gentry, six feet four, nearly twice their age, and a wounded veteran. He was also both mad and terrifying. Nonetheless, when Colthurst ordered Dobbin to convene a firing party, the youngster told Lieutenant Wilson to rush to the duty adjutant and warn him what was happening.

4.6 General Sir Charles Maxwell - Francis Dodd © IWM

Wilson found a bike and pedalled furiously the several hundred yards to the adjutant's office. Morgan told him to return immediately with the order to Colthurst that no-one was to be shot. As Wilson returned, he heard the fatal volleys. Poor Dobbin had been unable to resist the overbearing power of Colthurst's authority, and had commanded the firing party, all of whom were also Irish. Sheehy-Skeffington, Dickson and McIntyre were dead.

The myth that emerged - and still thrives - is that there was an attempt to cover-up for Bowen Colthurst, but because of complaints over the killing from Major Sir Francis Vane to Kitchener - an enquiry was called. However, this too was a cover-up. Both assertions are completely untrue. Sheehy-Skeffington was too well connected for his death to be concealed: his brother-in-law Tom Kettle, a former MP and eminent Irish barrister, was one of the most important nationalists holding the King's Commission. Moreover, Lt Sheehy, an officer in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the nephew of both the victim and of Kettle, was actually based in Portobello, although absent that morning.

The enquiry that soon followed was totally open, with military witnesses being ordered from the Western Front to attend. It was counsel for the Sheehy Skeffington family, Tim Healy KC - by this time of Sinn Fein sympathies - who declared:



In order to prevent the further slaughter of Dublin citizens, and in the hope of saving the lives of our followers now surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered, the members of the Provisional Government present at Head-Quarters have agreed to an unconditional surrender, and the Commandants of the various districts in the City and Country will order their commands to lay down arms.

P. H. Pearse
29th April 1916
3.45 P.M.

I agree to these conditions for the men only under my own Command in the Moore Street District and for the men in the Stephen's Green Command.

James Connolly
April 29/16

4.7 Irish Surrender Document © IWM

"In a time of war like the present, we should eliminate all topics of racial prejudice by making it clear that we are here concerned with an Irish regiment and Irish officers and the discredit which must indelibly remain on them would be a discredit to my own country, (Ireland) and therefore not appertaining to Great Britain."

The larger truth about that tragedy might have survived had the main witnesses themselves survived to tell their tale. But two of the vital Irish witnesses - Dobbin and Morgan - were to die in the war, and the third, Wilson, was soon relieved of his commission for curable ineptitude, thereafter vanishing amidst the discreet ranks of the Anglican clergy. Bowen Colthurst was found guilty but insane at his court-martial (even the validity of this verdict - the only possible one in the circumstances - is disputed within the preferred narrative) and remanded to Broadmoor, from which he was later released, to spend the rest of his life as a fundamentalist preacher in Canada.

The almost identical murders of two British army officers named Lucas and Worsley-Worswick, and two civilian employees in the Guinness brewery by a party of Royal Dublin Fusiliers under a Sergeant Flood at around the same time never entered the mythology or even the academic histories of the Rising. These killings testify to the perilous confusion that can result when a civilian-insurgency meets the imagined, plenipotentiary powers of a grossly-misunderstood martial law. The brewery was near the South Dublin Union, where on the Monday, insurgents had been indistinguishable from patients, and soldiers of the Royal Irish Regiment had paid a high price. On the Friday night, after four days' fighting, the exhausted Royal Dublin Fusiliers then failed to recognise two newly-arrived cavalry officers or their uniforms, and taking them to be insurgents, summarily 'executed' Lt Lucas and a Guinness employee, Mr Rice. Shortly afterwards, they shot 2nd Lt Worsley-Worswick and Mr Doughery in a brief but brutal melee.

The contrast between this affair and the mythological status of the Sheehy-Skeffington killing is salutary. Lucas's killing was at least the subject of a court-martial, which acquitted Flood, but is never accurately mentioned in the histories of the rising. One eminent historian passingly mentions Sergeant Flood, but seems to think he was complicit in the King Street killings, referred to shortly. Poor Worsley-Worswick is so completely forgotten that no charge resulted from his death, which of course is quite simply never referred to by any histories of this period. Nor indeed, are the killings of Rice and Doughery, both of whom were Dublin Protestants.

North King Street, referred to above, largely consisted of some of the infamous Dublin slums a few hundred yards from the GPO. It was unusual as a rebel stronghold, because it was densely populated and had no strategic or symbolic value. This was the scene of some fierce fighting, in which the South Staffordshires ingeniously improvised some armoured cars from lorries they had found in Guinness's brewery.

The evidence of civilians in North King Street leaves little doubt that some of the South Staffordshires behaved badly, and that murder was done. However, the soldiers were engaged in exhausting street fighting for which they had no training against an enemy in civilian clothes who knew the streets well. Both sides took to tunnelling through the tenement walls and cellars. This was appalling work. The rotten brickwork and plaster of these Georgian slums were infested with flesh-eating parasites, and their cellar-floors were frequently covered in permanent pools of slug-infested excrement. It's easy to imagine how little mercy or compassion one might expect from inexperienced and battle fatigued soldiers engaged in such filthy, squalid work. Thirteen South Staffs were killed in the King Street fighting: of the six whose ages are listed, two were nineteen.

Surrender

By this time, overall military authority had fallen onto the newly-arrived Lieutenant General Sir John Maxwell, an imperial pro-consul fresh from Egypt. The pressure now being exerted by the army had squeezed the rebels into several isolated and congested pockets. The RFA's 18-pounders under Major Hill unleashed such a torrent of fire on the GPO that at 1400 hrs on 29 April, the overall commander of rebel forces, Patrick Pearse, surrendered unconditionally, to be followed soon thereafter by other outposts.

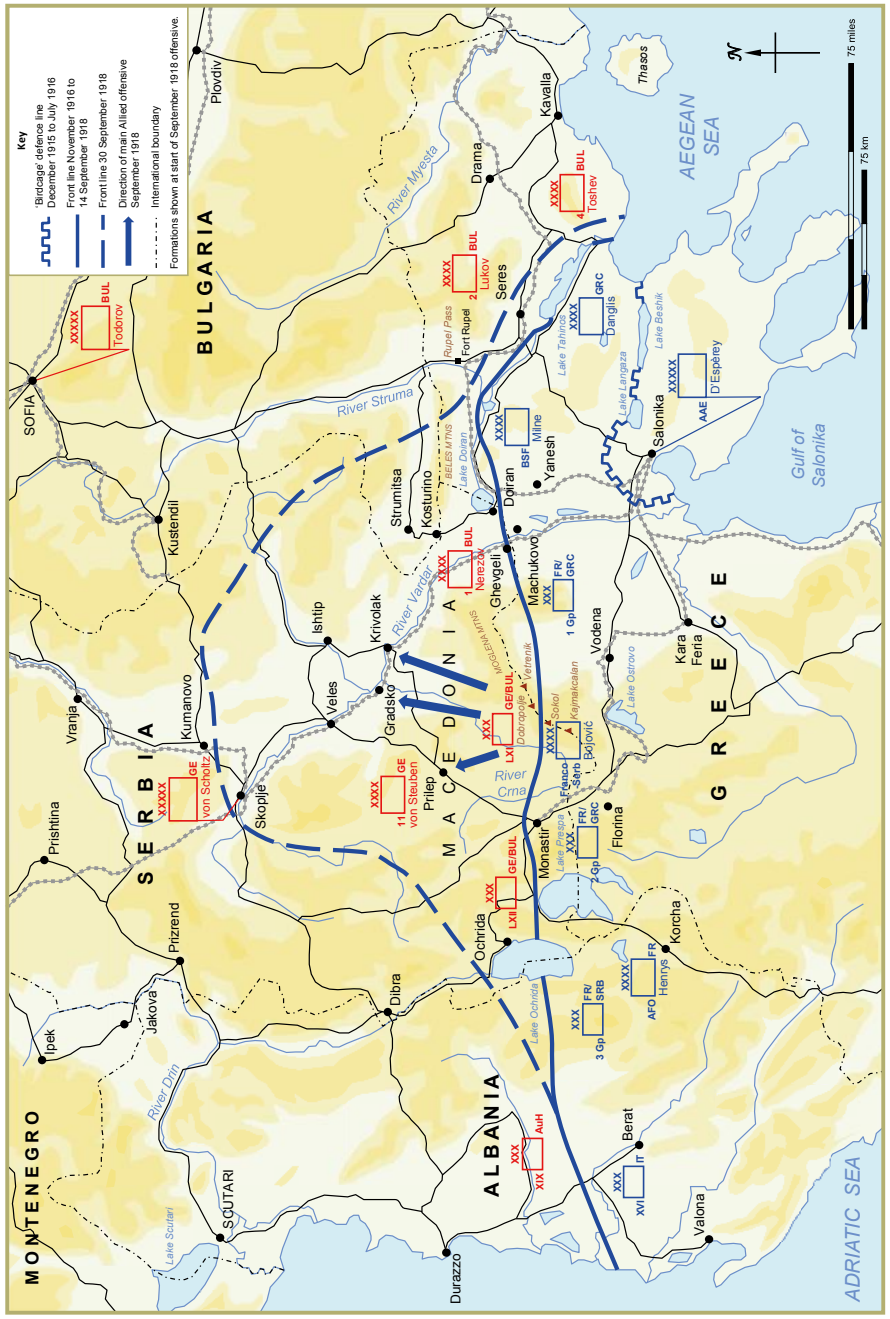
Official figures attest as follows. Officers: 17 killed, 46 wounded. Other ranks, 89 killed, 288 wounded. In all, thirteen republican leaders were later executed on Maxwell's orders, and entered

4.8 Broadsheet published in Dublin after the Insurrection of April 1916, showing sixteen leaders of the Irish Rebellion who were executed or sentenced to death © IWM

legend. It is worth putting these measures into context. In 1922-23, the new Irish Free State government executed over eighty captive prisoners, for having done no more than the insurgents of 1916. In France and Belgium in 1914, German forces had executed well over five thousand civilians. In 1915, Germans had executed a French civilian and eleven fugitive British soldiers, six of them Irish, in the French village of Iron. In other words, Maxwell's exactions were quite merciful by the standards of the time.

Considering the deplorable absence from duty of General Friend, and the distance initially of his deputy, Brigadier-General Lowe, from the centre of action, the army recovered well. It's hard to argue with General Maxwell's assessment that considering the nature of the fighting, the soldiers behaved with extraordinary restraint. Most of the killings of the unarmed and defenceless were done by insurgents, not by the army - yet with one exception, the only people to be charged with the specific crime of murder were soldiers. And even that exception, of Belfastman John McEntee, who was found guilty of the murder of an unarmed police officer, was not sentenced to death, as any killer of a policeman in Britain at the time would surely have been, but merely to life imprisonment.

However, the moral palsy of The Bachelors Walk Effect had not quite exhausted itself, for within a year he had been freed under a general amnesty. The army's real defeat was related to this absurd imbalance - namely, its utter failure to present the truth in clear and unambiguous terms, which was, of course, not the kind of thing that soldiers do - then or now. In the factual vacuum, the Irish Republican mythology triumphed, and the leaders of the Rising became revered.The careers of the three senior British officers foundered thereafter. Brigadier-General Lowe, most responsible for the victory, was not even called to give evidence before the Commission of Enquiry, and never mentioned his role in defeating the rising in his submission to the Dictionary of National Biography. Friend got a humiliating backroom appointment in France, handling compensation-claims, and Maxwell retired, to be vilified for ever within Irish historiography, merely for doing his very painful duty.



Map 5.1 The Macedonian Front

5. Macedonia

Alan Wakefield

The Allied military commitment in Macedonia began on 5 October 1915, when the 10th (Irish) Division and French 156th Division began landing at the port of Salonika in neutral Greece. It was hoped this show of force would deter Bulgaria from joining an Austro-German attack on Serbia. Not satisfied with the territorial settlement following the First Balkan War (October 1912 - May 1913) Bulgaria attacked her former ally Serbia. This Second Balkan War (16 June - 18 July 1913) proved a disaster for Bulgaria as the Serbs were joined by Greece, Romania and Turkey. The resulting Treaty of Bucharest (10 August 1913) doubled the size of Serbia and made Greece the most important power in the Aegean. Overturning this peace settlement became a cornerstone of Bulgarian foreign policy. The coming of the First World War offered an excellent opportunity to achieve this aim.

With the opening of Allied operations at the Dardanelles in March 1915, the Balkans became a key strategic region as Britain and France aimed to draw Balkan states into the war against Turkey. Greek Prime Minister, Eleftherios Venizelos, offered his nation's military forces for an invasion of Turkey and similar hopes surrounded possible Bulgarian and Romanian intervention. Unfortunately, Russian fears of losing out in the race for Constantinople and control of the Straits, blocked any chance of military assistance from the Balkan states being accepted by Britain and France in 1915.

Once the land campaign on the Gallipoli peninsula began in April 1915, Germany stepped up attempts to win over Bulgaria. With Turkey desperate for munitions the need for a secure supply route across the Balkans was imperative. When Romania banned the transit of war materials across her territory the only alternative route for Germany to supply her ally was via Serbia and Bulgaria. Already heavily engaged on the Western and Eastern Fronts, Germany could not provide adequate forces to support Austria-Hungary in a quick, knock-out blow against Serbia. To make certain of victory the Central Powers aimed to involve Bulgaria in the coming offensive. At the same time, Britain and France worked to ensure continued Bulgarian neutrality by promising territory at Turkish expense. However, the land most coveted by the government in Sofia was Serbian Macedonia. This placed the Central Powers in the best position to fulfil Bulgarian aspirations, especially given the lack of Allied military success during 1915. Stalemate on the Western Front was coupled with failure to inflict a defeat on Turkey at Gallipoli. Of even greater importance was the defeat inflicted on Russia during the Gorlice - Tarnow Offensive in May 1915. German victory appeared a serious possibility and on 6 September, Bulgaria committed herself to war by signing a secret convention with the Central Powers agreeing to begin offensive operations against Serbia five days after Austro-German units attacked on 6 October 1915.

On 22 September 1915, as the Bulgarian army mobilised, Greece and Serbia called for 150,000 Allied troops. This force equated to that laid down in the Greek - Serbian defence agreement of 1 June 1913, which promised mutual support should either country be attacked by a third power. At heart this was an anti-Bulgarian treaty established to maintain a favourable status quo in the Balkans for Greece and Serbia. However, in 1915, King

5.1 Wounded soldier of the 10th Battalion, Black Watch being carried out of a communication trench on the 'Birdcage' Linenear Salonika February 1916 © IWM

Constantine and his military chiefs were able to remain inactive as Serbia was in no position to send troops south to assist Greece in an attack on Bulgaria. Even Venizelos admitted his nation's forces could not make a stand alone, hence his appeal to the Allies. In reply, British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, stated that only a small contingent could be sent quickly to the Balkans. With stalemate at Gallipoli, there were few in the British government or military who favoured active intervention. However, French pledges of support for Serbia, with backing from Russia, locked the Allies into a policy of committing troops to the Balkans.

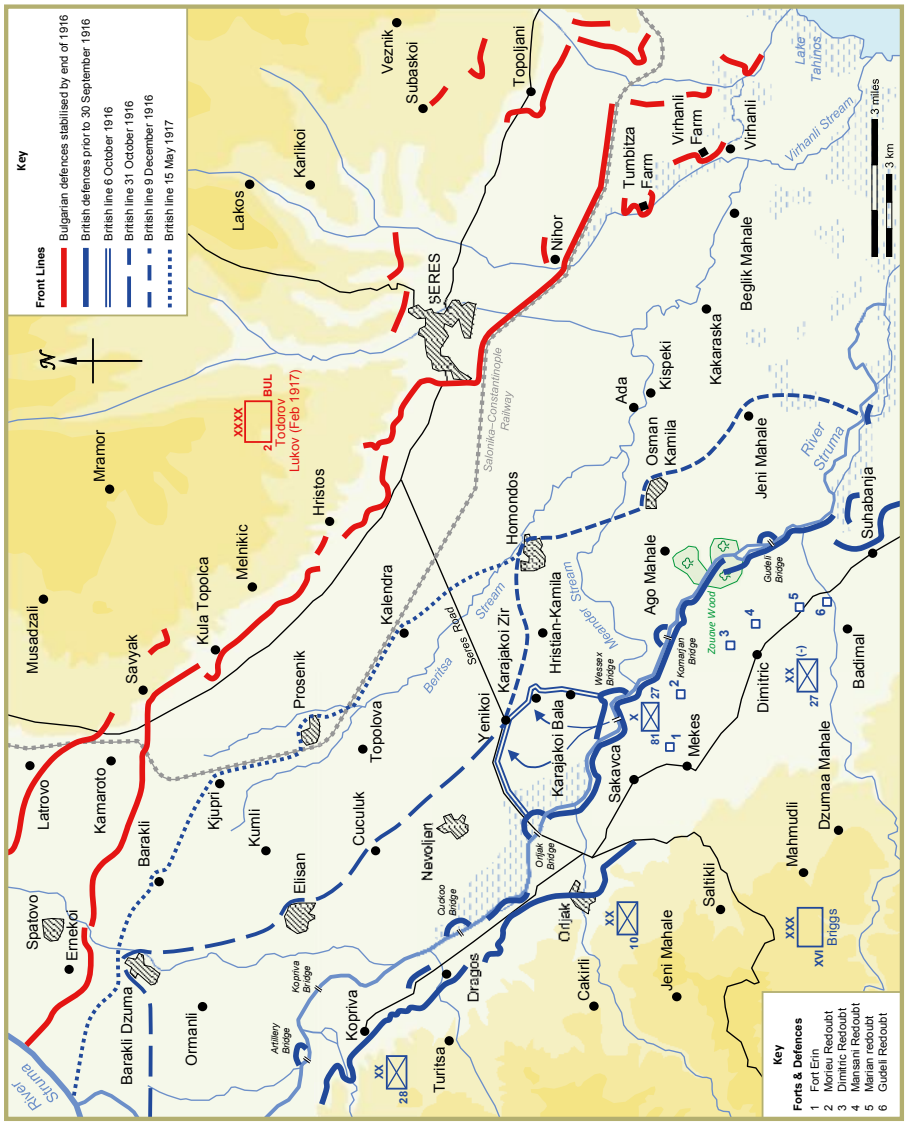
Until mid-November French forces attempted to keep a line of retreat open for the hard-pressed Serbs. When this proved futile, Serbian political and military leaders decided to continue the fight by leading their army into exile. Thus began the Serbian army's epic winter march across the mountains of Albania, the survivors being evacuated by British and French warships to Corfu and Bizerta. The Bulgarians then turned their attention to the Anglo-French force in southern Serbia. Ill equipped for the harsh Balkan winter Allied troops suffered extensive losses from frostbite and exposure prior to the Bulgarian 2nd Army launching a major attack on 7 December. In two days of hard fighting 10th (Irish) Division was swept off the Kosturino Ridge and along with the French began retreating towards the Greek frontier at Doiran.

5.2 General Sarrail, commander of Allied forces in Macedonia with General Sir George Milne, commander of the British Salonika Force from 9 May 1916 © IWM

By 14 December all Allied troops were back on Greek soil and retreating towards Salonika. That same day, with the decision having been taken to maintain forces in the Balkans, General Maurice Sarrail and Lieutenant General Sir Bryan Mahon, began planning the defence of the city. Work began two days later, on what became a 70-mile defensive line running from the River Vardar in the west to the mouth of the River Struma in the east. Nicknamed 'The Birdcage' by British troops on account of the lavish use of barbed wire, the line took five months to complete. However, the defences were never tested as German pressure ensured Bulgarian troops did not advance towards Salonika. Instead the Bulgarians took up strong positions along the Greek-Serbian frontier to defend their territorial gains.

As British and French reinforcements arrived at Salonika, General Sarrail was appointed GOC Allied Forces in the Balkans on 16 January 1916. By this time Mahon's own command, now designated the British Salonika Force (BSF), was in the process of expanding to five divisions. With no threat to Salonika, Sarrail began moving troops up country and on 16 March the French 243rd Infantry Brigade drove German infantry out of the village of Machukovo on the River Vardar. The first British formation to leave the 'Birdcage' was 66th Brigade (22nd Division) which began moving up to Yanesh, south of Doiran, on 15 April. The Allied move north continued during the following month, which also witnessed a change at the top of the BSF as Lieutenant General Sir George Milne replaced Mahon.

On 26 May the Allies received a shock when the Bulgarian 2nd Army seized a Greek fort at the southern end of the Rupel Pass leading into the Struma Valley. Failure to challenge this infringement of their territory put the government in Athens on a collision course with the Allies. Sarrail declared a state of siege at Salonika, a move that established formal Allied military control over the city and British and French warships blockaded Greek ports. In the negotiations that followed, King Constantine had little option but to agree with Allied demands for the demobilization of the Greek army. The Allies position in Greece was further strengthened in May and August 1916 by the arrival of the Serbian army and contingents from Italy and Russia. With these reinforcements to hand, Sarrail launched an offensive against Bulgarian position south of Doiran on 9 August. As part of this assault the 7th Ox & Bucks Light Infantry seized Horseshoe Hill on 18 August, the first offensive use of British troops in Macedonia. As Sarrail continued operations he was caught off guard as the Bulgarian 1st and 2nd Armies advanced into Greece. Heavy fighting was required to stop the 1st Army pushing south from Monastir towards Florina and Lake Ostrovo, whilst 2nd Army seized most of the region east of the Struma, including the town of Seres. In retaliation and to support the recent Romanian entry into the war, Sarrail opened a second Allied offensive on 12 September, spearheaded by French, Russian and Serbian forces west of the Vardar. This fighting included a most impressive feat of arms when Serbian troops captured the 2,524m (8,280ft) Mt Kajmakcalan (12-30 September 1916). In support of the main offensive, the BSF's XVI Corps took the villages of Karajakoi Bala,



Map 5.2 The Struma Valley

Karajakoi Zir and Yenikoi on the eastern side of the River Struma (20 September - 4 October). XVI Corps continued operations along the Struma into December in an attempt to pinch out key Bulgarian strongpoints. On 19 November, as weather conditions worsened and casualty rates became unsustainable, Sarrail closed down the offensive. Although these operations failed to break the Bulgarian line and provided little in the way of military assistance to Romania, the Allies did capture Monastir. If not of major strategic significance this achievement was an important boost to Allied morale as it placed the Serbian army back on home soil.

The year 1916 also witnessed the establishment of a pro-Allied Greek Provisional Government under Venizelos at Salonika on 9 October. Allied support for Venizelos culminated in the abdication of King Constantine on 12 June 1917, allowing

5.3 M. Venizelos arriving at Salonika on board the *Hesperia*, 9 October 1916 © IWM

Greece to unite as the new monarch, Alexander, recalled Venizelos as prime minister. Two weeks later Greece entered the war as an Allied power. Prior to this diplomatic victory, Sarrail launched a spring offensive west of the Vardar on 5 May 1917. Delayed by poor weather, French, Italian and Serbian troops made little headway against the well entrenched Bulgarians and the offensive was shut down on 21 May in the face of mounting casualties. In support the BSF's XII Corps fought the First Battle of Doiran (24 April - 9 May 1917). Although gaining no ground, British attacks prevented Bulgarian troops moving west of the Vardar to oppose the main Allied offensive. Lack of manpower and munitions ensured that no further large scale military operations occurred on the Salonika Front during the remainder of 1917. Instead on 18-19 August, Allied troops in the base area around Salonika found themselves engaged in a humanitarian mission as fire took hold of the city. In total 9,500 houses were lost within an area of one square kilometer, leaving more than 70,000 people homeless. Allied forces evacuated people from the city, set up tented camps and provided food and medical services until the Greek authorities were able to take control of the situation.

The first half of 1918 was a period of relative quiet on the Macedonian Front as from 21 March all eyes focused on events in France and Flanders. Here Ludendorff launched the German army in a series of offensives to win the war before US manpower and materiel tipped the balance overwhelmingly in favour of the Allies. Failure of the Germans to achieve a knock-out blow on the Western Front condemned the Central Powers to defeat and the road to Allied victory began on 8 August at Amiens.

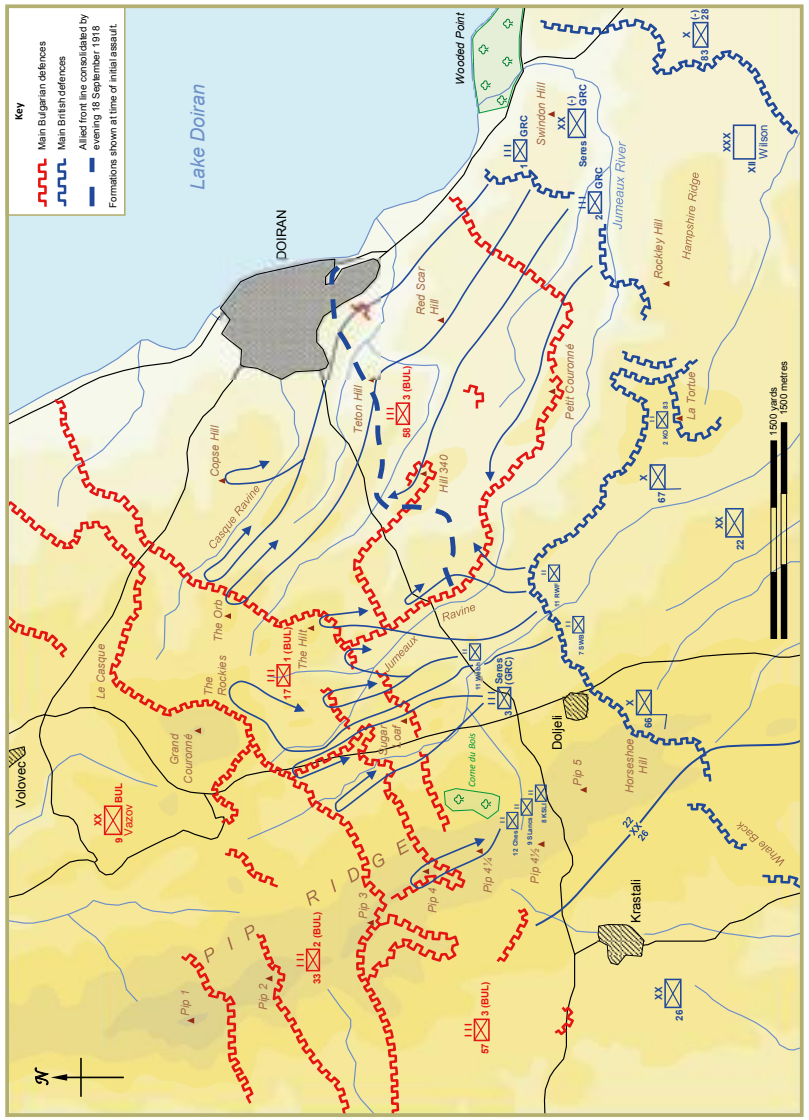
Despite suffering reductions in manpower to bolster the Western Front, Allied forces at Salonika prepared for offensive action. In June 1918, General Louis Franchet d'Esperey took command in Macedonia. Touring the front extensively after his arrival, d'Esperey discussed options with Field Marshal Zivojin Misic, then commanding the 1st Serbian Army. Agreement was reached for an attack over the Moglena Mountains west of the Vardar. Here Bulgarian defences were limited as an attack over the difficult terrain was not expected. Beyond the mountains little stood in the way of an advance to the railheads at Gradsko and Krivolak, 35 miles behind the front. Cutting the railway would threaten the entire Bulgarian line and open the door to victory.

The offensive opened on 15 September when Serbian and French troops stormed the mountain peaks of Vetrenik, Dobropolje and Sokol. After a day of tough fighting the Bulgarians were pushed back to their second line of defences. The following day this line too was breached. Too few German units were on hand to stiffen the Bulgarian line as the Allied advance continued. To prevent Bulgarian reinforcements moving west of the Vardar, British and Greek troops attacked around Lake Doiran on 18 - 19 September. As in 1917 the Doiran position held out against determined assaults. However, not a single Bulgarian soldier left Doiran to assist their comrades against the French and Serbs. On 20 September, with Gradsko threatened, Bulgarian C-in-C General Gregori Todorov, ordered a general withdrawal after discussions with local German commanders. Pursued by Allied forces and bombed in mountain passes by the RAF, the retreat became a rout. With foreign troops on Bulgarian soil, peace emissaries were sent to d'Esperey on 26 September. Three days later an armistice was signed, coming into effect on 30 September. After almost three years of stalemate the campaign ended in dramatic fashion in just sixteen days.

Military Forces

In terms of military forces engaged, the Salonika Campaign was perhaps the most diverse of the First World War. By early 1917 the Allies fielded around 600,000 men in six national contingents: French, British, Serbian, Russian, Italian and Greek (National Defence Army). Within the BSF and Armée Française d'Orient were also found units from India, Indo-China, North and West Africa. For transport and construction work behind the front line the British employed volunteer units such as the Macedonian Mule Corps and Maltese Labour Corps. Canadian, Australian and New Zealand medical personnel were also part of the BSF and the volunteer Scottish Women's Hospital had units attached to the Serbian army. From January 1916 Allied forces were designated the Armée d'Orient and placed under French command. This situation reflected the primacy of French forces in this theatre of war and greater French interests in the Balkans.

Although appearing strong on paper, the Armée d'Orient suffered from a number of deficiencies that undermined its ability to undertake sustained military operations. First amongst these was lack of manpower. By 1917 Britain and Italy refused



Map 5.3 The Battle of Doiran 1918

to send new formations to Salonika with the British increasingly looking to scale down their commitment (strength at that time was - 228,277[1]). The sending of 60th (London) Division in late 1916 was grudgingly undertaken following pressure from France and the formation only remained with the BSF for nine months before moving to Palestine. For the Italians, wresting control of Albania from the Austro-Hungarians was always more important that contributing to overall Allied operations in the Balkans and no troops beyond the 30,000 strong 35th Division joined the Armée d'Orient. It even proved a struggle to replace losses from units already serving in Macedonia. The low priority placed on the campaign by the War Office in London led to desperate measures with the formation for front line service of the 228th Brigade from six garrison battalions in November 1916. Officers seconded to command the new formation were shocked by what they found as, due to the age and medical

5.4 British BL 2.75-inch mountain gun firing from a camouflaged position on the Doiran Front © IWM

rating of the men, the accepted task of garrison battalions was to relieve fighting troops of duties behind the lines. However, 228th Brigade allowed Milne to release front line formations from quiet sectors for more active operations.

For the Russians manpower problems were due to logistics, the only feasible option being to transport reinforcements by ship from Archangel to Salonika. With the outbreak of revolution in March 1917, Russian troops were withdrawn from the front line in Macedonia due to their unreliability. In addition, many of the limited reinforcements arriving were found to be pro-Bolshevik. The solution to this problem was to transport all hard-liners to North Africa, whilst more reliable men served on in labour battalions. For the Serbian army, exiled from its occupied homeland, lack of a population from which to recruit seriously affected numbers in combat units. It was not until 1918 with the arrival of two divisions formed from ex-Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war that losses suffered during the 1916 and 1917 offensives were made good.

5.5 Grave of Katherine Harley of the Scottish Women's Hospitals in the Military Cemetery in Salonika on the Doiran Front © IWM

The manpower crisis was exacerbated by the withdrawal of British and French troops in 1917 and 1918. The first significant reduction came during summer 1917 when 10th (Irish) and 60th (London) Divisions moved to Palestine. This downsizing was followed in summer 1918 by the withdrawal of twelve British battalions and over 10,000 French troops to make good losses suffered during the German offensives on the Western Front. Although such a loss of trained manpower was impossible to make good, Allied forces benefitted through Greece joining their cause and by July 1918, 250,000 men of the Greek Army were in the field, mainly attached to British and French forces. For General Milne, this new source of manpower allowed his depleted army to concentrate forces for the Second Battle of Doiran in September 1918. Even so, the Greek army was never employed to its full potential as many senior Allied officers, including the new C-in-C, d'Esperey, viewed the force with suspicion, preferring to use Venizelist volunteer units whenever possible. During the Second battle of Doiran this caused some command and control problems as the Seres and Crete Divisions had no experience of operating with the BSF.

Coupled with the manpower crisis was a general shortage of ammunition, equipment and supplies. For the British a particularly serious deficiency existed in terms of artillery. To create a barely sufficient bombardment force for the First and Second Battles of Doiran, General Milne was forced to strip the majority of guns from formations not actively engaged. A call for 8-inch howitzers, made by Milne prior to First Doiran in 1917, resulted in the arrival of a single four-gun battery a year later. The British commander also suffered from a shortage of gas shells for the preliminary bombardments of both battles. Making matters worse was the need for the British and French to supply other national contingents in Macedonia. The rejuvenated Serbian army was totally re-equipped by the French in 1916 and continued to receive weapons and ammunition throughout the

campaign. In addition, motor transport and medical services for the Serbs were largely provided by the British. Both the British and French shared responsibility for equipping Venizelist forces with artillery, transport and medical units. In addition, the two Russian brigades arrived without artillery, which had to be supplied from French sources.

Facing the Allies in Macedonia were around 500,000 troops representing all four members of the Central Powers, with the overwhelming majority being Bulgarian. Even the so-called German 11th Army was an overwhelmingly Bulgarian formation, with only senior command positions held by officers of the Kaiser's army and a limited number of infantry battalions of German origin. Additionally, specialist German units including heavy and mountain artillery, machine-gun companies and engineers were assigned to the Bulgarian 1st and 2nd Armies to improve firepower and combat efficiency. As with her other allies, Germany supported Bulgaria with major reinforcements at times of necessity. During Sarrail's 1916 offensive, two German divisions were sent to the Balkans. Such deployments were always dependent on the immediate strategic situation and priorities elsewhere. By September 1918, few German troops remained in Macedonia and reinforcement of the Bulgarian army by German divisions from the Ukraine failed as the Franco-Serbian advance was so rapid as to afford no time for reinforcements to arrive before defeat was inevitable.

Whilst Germany provided significant forces for the campaign, Austro-Hungarian involvement was limited to specialists, such as machine-gun and assault companies. Already heavily committed on the Eastern and Italian Fronts and in Albania, little was available from the Habsburg Empire. Finally, between October 1916 and July 1917, the Turkish XX Corps (46th and 50th Divisions) faced elements of the BSF in the lower Struma valley. This 40,000 man force was strengthened on arrival by volunteers from the Muslim population of the region.

The Bulgarian army, which formed the Allies' major opponent in Macedonia, was generally solid, especially in defence. The majority of officers and men had gained active service experience in the Balkan Wars. Initially well-equipped the army encountered problems as the war lengthened due to the country's limited industrial base, which made it impossible to manufacture weapons, ammunition and other war materiel in sufficient quantities. This made the Bulgarians increasingly reliant on Germany and on captured munitions. By mid-1918 the Bulgarian army and nation had grown war weary. Morale was undermined by the failure of Ludendorff's offensives on the Western Front. Many Bulgarians increasingly viewed the Germans as an occupying force rather than an ally as foodstuffs were stripped from the country. These attitudes spread to front line soldiers and, coupled with shortages of rations, munitions, boots and uniforms, caused morale to plummet and undermine the army's ability to resist the Allied push in September 1918.

Terrain

The Salonika Campaign was fought along a front of 250 miles, running from Albania to the mouth of the River Struma in Greece. The area of operations included wide, open valleys and plains, tangled masses of hills and ravines such as those at Doiran and the towering Beles and Moglena Mountains. Another feature was a number of large lakes. This mixture of terrain called for different styles of warfare both in terms of offence and defence. At Doiran the Bulgarians turned the area into a fortress. Trenches were blasted from solid rock and dugouts were constructed in a similar manner and roofed with concrete. Ammunition stores, observation posts, artillery and machine gun positions were constructed to withstand hits from heavy howitzers. The effectiveness of artillery and support weapons was ensured through expert positioning and the existence of accurate ranging tables coupled with an efficient communications system enabling fire to be brought to bear quickly in aid of the defending infantry. These were men of the 9th (Pleven) Division, Bulgaria's premier military formation. They knew their positions intimately and were well trained in defensive tactics and the art of delivering immediate counterattacks. Their morale was high, bolstered by the belief that their defences were impregnable. It was here that the BSF fought its major battles of the campaign as the Doiran position guarded passes through the hills and mountains leading to Bulgaria. Its strategic significance ensured the Bulgarians would defend Doiran at all costs. This drawing in of Bulgarian troops was a key objective of the two Battles of

5.6 British troops constructing a street barricade in a recently captured village in the Struma Valley, autumn 1916 © IWM

5.7 Balkan panorama. Pip Ridge, Grande Couronne, Lake Doiran, taken from Petit Couronne © IWM

Doiran as it prevented reinforcement of Bulgarian units facing the main Allied offensives in 1917 and 1918.

British and later Greek troops also fought in the Struma Valley. This flat plain with a width of between five to twelve miles consisted of a mixture of marshland, areas of thick scrub and patchworks of abandoned farmland surrounding small deserted settlements. Like much of Macedonia the valley had suffered the ravages of the Balkan Wars and few locations offered the sort of accommodation for troops as was to be found in French and Belgian villages behind the front line. Here the war was one of small-scale trench raids, ambushes and patrols by infantry, cavalry and cyclists. From late 1916 the British fought a series of 'Bite and Hold' operations to dominate the valley through the capture and incorporation of villages and woods into a defended outpost line. Given the incidence of malaria suffered by troops serving in the valley, both sides withdrew to the hills during summer months, abandoning their defences and creating a wide expanse of no-man's-land stretching across the valley floor. At such times offensive patrolling became standard operational practice.

In contrast to the Struma and Doiran, the Beles and Moglena mountain ranges were, by their very nature, viewed as impassable by the Bulgarians. This led to these sectors of the front lacking strong defences and being garrisoned by numerically weaker or less reliable units. Despite the capture of Mt. Kajmakcalan in September 1916 the Bulgarians appear to have drawn few lessons from this defeat as the Allied breakthrough in September 1918 began with a similar operation.

Climate

The often difficult Macedonian landscape was made more challenging by extremes of summer and winter weather. This factor tended to restrict active military campaigning to the months April - June and September - October. With the arrival of summer came temperatures of up to 112˚F in the shade. The heat prevented all but essential work from being done during afternoons. This is not to say that summer afternoons always provided a welcome break from the hardships of campaigning as swarms of insects tried men's patience, especially at meal times and brought the threat of disease. Under such conditions keeping troops adequately supplied with water also proved a problem. Military engineers of all armies worked hard to improve matters, tapping natural springs, sinking wells and incorporating fountains of deserted villages into water supply networks.

During winter, troops experienced blizzards, freezing winds, severe hail storms and heavy rain interspersed with occasional mild, spring-like day. Probably the worst conditions experienced during the campaign occurred during the winter of 1915, when the British and French attempted to support the Serbian army. Little in the way of proper shelter was available for the men and winter clothing was in short supply. By early December, 10th (Irish) Division alone had evacuated 23 officers and 1,663 men to hospitals at Salonika suffering from frostbite and exposure[2] By the following winter, with Allied forces well established in Macedonia and base depots supplying most of the troops needs, the men did not suffer to the same extent. Even so, with most front line soldiers accommodated in dugouts, tents or bivouac shelters, conditions were primitive and winter generally became a losing battle against the natural elements. Roads and tracks were often blocked by snow drifts or washed away by rain and melt water making it almost impossible to bring up rations and equipment. During such times mules rather than motor transport were relied on to keep supply lines open.

Disease

In terms of sickness Salonika was an old fashioned type of campaign with casualties from illness and disease far outweighed those resulting from enemy action. For the BSF non-battle casualties amounted to 481,262, twenty times the level of battle casualties and of this total, 162,517 were malaria cases[3]. All military forces in the campaign suffered a high incidence of malaria but the worst rates of infection fell on the BSF's XVI Corps in the Struma Valley. One of the malarial black spots of Europe, its meandering river, lakes, sluggish streams and marshes providing a perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes. Despite troops being pulled out of the valley during summer months units continued to suffer. Summer 1916 proved worst as troops were still learning the skills of campaigning in Macedonia. At this time sick rates were so high that brigades in 10th (Irish) Division were only capable of fielding a composite battalion.

In an attempt to cut the sick list a number of preventative measures against malaria were implemented during 1917, drawing on the experiences of the previous summer. These included the drainage of marshland, canalization of streams, cutting or burning of long grass around camps, the construction of mosquito proof huts, provision of tents and bivouacs with netting, and the equipping of sentries and others on night duties with helmet nets and protective gloves. In addition front line troops were regularly dosed with quinine. Overall, it is difficult to gauge the success of the anti-malarial campaign. The Medical Services official history is probably nearest the mark in stating; 'The area was so vast that it was an impossible task to exterminate the mosquito in a short time, and probably no one imagined that more than a partial success could be attained. It is questionable therefore whether the measures employed reduced the mosquito incidence to such an extent as to justify the amount of labour expended'[4].

Lines of Communication

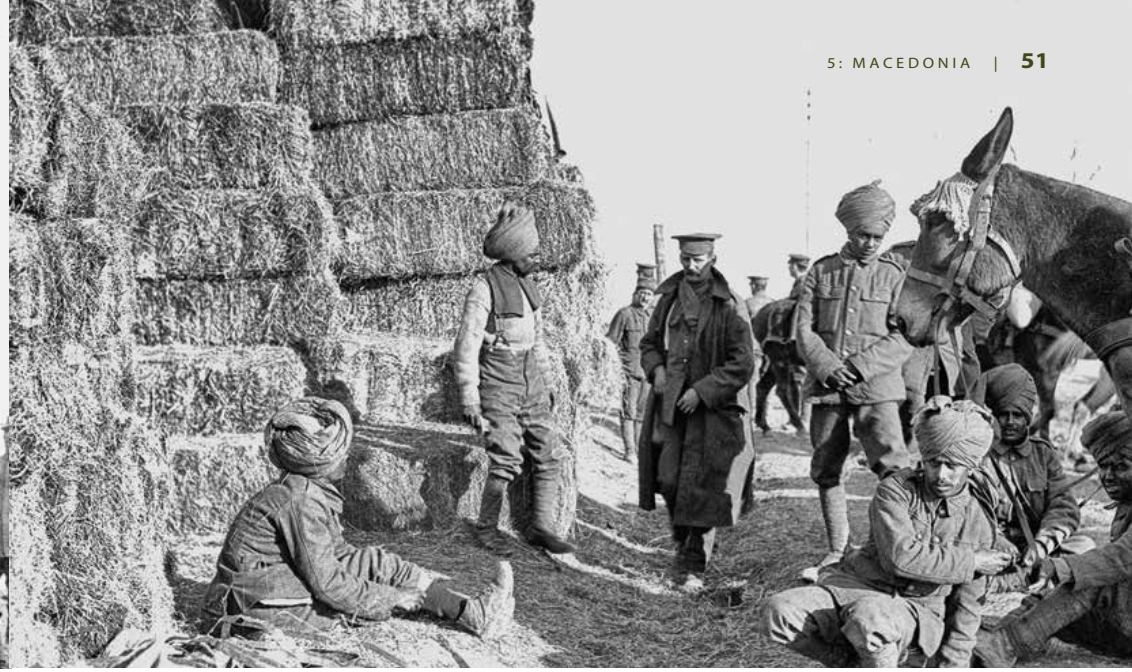
Another area where great efforts were made was that of logistics. As the majority of supplies for the Armée d'Orient came from Britain and France, Allied forces were dependent on a vulnerable sea line of communication through the Mediterranean. With a coalition of British, French, Italian and even Japanese naval forces responsible for defending merchant shipping it is perhaps not surprising that a coordinated strategy to defeat German and Austro-Hungarian submarines failed to emerge. Some idea of the task of simply maintaining forces in the field is given by the official estimate that a single British division in Macedonia required 1,400 tons of supplies, stores and ammunition per week and more when active operations were in progress[5]. In all, fourteen British and French divisions, plus other combat and support units, served with the Armée d'Orient. Most supplies and ammunition for the Serbian army and Venizelist Greek

5.8 Royal Engineers boring an artesian well to supply water at an army camp near Salonika in 1916 © IWM

5.9 Lance Corporal Harrison, 12th Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers, wearing protective anti-mosquito clothin © IWM

5.10 Sister Stone of the Scottish Women's Hospital taking the temperature of a wounded British soldier, Salonika 1916 © IWM

5.11 Italians unloading a mule from a ship at Salonika. The mule is hoisted down in a sling © IWM



5.12 Indian muleteers waiting for their loads at an Army Service Corps forage dump near Salonika, 1915 © IWM

forces also arrived by sea. During 1917, the success of U-boats against ships bringing supplies to Britain, greatly reduced the number of vessels available to support military operations away from the Western Front. This factor, coupled to shipping losses in the Mediterranean, made resupply of Allied forces a difficult task. The evacuation of sick and wounded to Egypt, Malta, France and Britain dramatically reduced during 1917 as did the chance for soldiers to take home leave. This led to the establishment of an overland route for the conveyance of troops and casualties. This opened in October 1917 and involved use of the railway between Salonika and Bralo, followed by a road journey to Itea from where ships were taken to Taranto. From that port the railways of Italy and France completed the route, although British personnel still had a Channel crossing to make before reaching home. The length of such a journey ensured that home leave for British troops remained a rare experience. Instead the army encouraged sporting competitions and entertainments such as concert parties to keep up morale. Officers took part in field sports and other ranks held tortoise races whilst the flora and fauna of Macedonia and its ancient past encouraged professional and amateur naturalists and archaeologists to resume their pre-war interests when out of the front line.

Transport problems were also faced within Macedonia. The four main railways radiating out from Salonika were initially under Greek control and certainly not designed to take the increase in traffic that came with a military campaign. A great deal of work was required to establish something close to an efficient network. Supplementing the standard-gauge lines an extensive network of light railways were constructed by the British and French allowing supplies and ammunition to be brought close to the front line. When Allied forces arrived in Macedonia there were few proper roads and none capable of bearing the weight of motor transport that continually plied between base depots and forward supply dumps. Large gangs of civilian labourers, including women and children, were employed to work on road repair and construction under the supervision of military engineers. Infantry units out of the line also supplied working parties for such duties. Until well into 1917, when the road and light railway network was well established, mule pack transport was crucial for the majority of military formations in Macedonia. British units were set up with a pack transport scale known as 'Salonika 4'5, which replaced most wheeled transport. Although the War Office forced Milne to reduce his pack transport scale due to the need for mules in other theatres of war, the British commander fought to maintain 'Salonika 4' for his front line units as without it these would have been hard pressed to maintain their forward positions and tactical manoeuvrability.

5.13 A huge food dump for the British Forces at Salonika, 1916 © IWM

Concluding Remarks

Despite a complex diplomatic background, the multi-national forces involved and shortages of manpower and equipment, the Armée d'Orient achieved military victory in the Balkans by forcing the surrender of Bulgaria on 30 September 1918. However, this is no vindication of the 'Easterner' strategy as victory came too late to have a real impact on the overall outcome of the war. British and French forces in particular would certainly have been better employed on the Western Front as the Allies were never able to commit sufficient military resources to achieve an early knock-out blow against Bulgaria. Despite this the Salonika Campaign is certainly worthy of study as an example of the problems of coalition warfare and diplomacy with neutral powers. Above all the Allied prosecution of the campaign in Macedonia illustrates how to conduct a large military operation on a shoestring, at the end of a long, vulnerable line of communication whilst facing a determined enemy over difficult terrain and against the vagaries of climate and endemic disease.

Endnotes

1. 'Report on Man-Power in the British Salonika Forces', dated 31 July 1917. The report was compiled by Lt Gen H M Lawson. A copy is to be found at TNA under WO 106/1358.
2. Falls, C, Military Operations Macedonia, Vol 1 (HMSO, London, 1933), p.65
3. Mitchell, T J & Smith, G M, Medical Services: Casualties and Medical Statistics of the Great War (HMSO, London, 1931, p.187 & p.194
4. Macpherson, Maj Gen W G (ed), Medical Services: Diseases of the War, Vol.1 (HMSO, London, 1923), p.245
5. Falls, C, Military Operations Macedonia, Vol 1 (HMSO, London, 1933), p.270

This is an example of the orders given for a low-level operation - in this case a trench raid. Editor

OPERATIONAL ORDERS FOR A TRENCH RAID BY THE 9TH SOUTH LANCASHIRES, 4-5 NOVEMBER 1917[1]

Information

From enemy deserter:

Post of 1 officer and 12 ORs often located in ravine between 'Big' and 'Little' SELIMLI

Patrol of 40 ORs spend nights near village

Both groups arrive from North & North-East, arriving during early part of night.

Our Own Troops

77th Brigade, 26th Division are raiding BOYAL HILL at 2220 hrs the same night[2].

Intention

To raid the villages of 'Big' and 'Little' SELIMLI on the night of 4-5 November to kill or capture enemy patrols and destroy enemy positions in SELIMLI DERE[3] between the villages.

Order Of Battle

'A' Party: Captain J A Brewer, 2 Officers & 120 ORs[4]

'B' Party: 1 NCO, 20 ORs, 1 Lewis Gun team[5]

'C' Party: 1 Officer, 20 ORs, 1 Lewis Gun team[6]

Action On Morning Of 4th

1 NCO & 3 ORs to DAUTLI village before dawn on observation duty and to remain until nightfall. These men not to wear white armband until 2200 hrs

'A', 'B', 'C' Parties to rendezvous in BASTION before dawn and remain all day.

Action At 2125 Hrs

At 2125 hrs 'A', 'B' 'C' Parties will move from BASTION in time to leave the DAUTLI track at 2035 hrs.

'B' Party move to point where DAUTLI - WHITE PILLAR RIDGE track crosses SELIMLI DERE[7]. To deal with any enemy coming from WHITE SCAR HILL.

'C' Party move to DAUTLI to cover retirement of 'A' & 'B' Parties.

2145 hrs 'A' Party to move from assembly position[8] to deployment position where two ravines meet.[9]

Attack

As soon as moon rises (2220 hrs) or before if discovered 'A' Party to deploy in 2 lines. 1st line: 1 Officer & 30 ORs at 4 pace intervals with their right on road and left on ravine running east of 'Little' SELIMLI.

2nd line: 1 Officer & 20 ORs at 1 pace intervals in rear of extreme right of 1st line. To prevent escape of enemy to west. 1 Officer & 20 ORs at 1 pace intervals in rear of centre of 1st line.

1 NCO & 19 ORs to file alone east bank of ravine to prevent escape of enemy to east.

Whole party to move through 'Little' SELIMLI to the DERE bayoneting or capturing any enemy met with. Then to envelope and rush 'Big' SELIMLI.

Any engagement to be conducted as energetically as possible, all parties withdrawing when no further opportunities exist for inflicting loss on the enemy.

Withdrawal

'A' Party to be withdrawn via track north of DAUTLI, warning 'B' & 'C' Parties as they pass. 'C' Party to withdraw last.

Artillery

3 batteries of 101st Brigade, RFA, are available to barrage the tracks beyond the SELIMLIS if called on by OC 9th South Lancs.

No barrage to last longer than 10 minutes.

Rates of fire: 4 rounds per minute for 18-pounder field guns & 3 rounds per minute for field howitzers.

Machine Guns

2 Vickers guns from 66th MGC in position on Glengarry Hill to lay down barrage fire on pre-registered targets if called on by OC 9th South Lancs. Ammunition: 3000 rounds per gun.

Signals

'A' Party request for artillery barrage: Officer to fire 2 very lights simultaneously.

If 'B' Party driven in: NCO to fire 1 green very light.

If 'C' Party driven in: Officer to fire 1 red very light.

If 'A' Party returned and 'B' & 'C' not come in: whistle blasts to be blown in front of DAUTLI TRACK POST. If no response 2 red very lights to be fired.

Kit

All ranks involved in raid to wear a white, 4-inch wide, band round upper right arm.

Steel helmet, rifle, bayonet in sandbag sheath, equipment, ammunition, wire cutters and very pistols to be carried. Rifle magazine to contain 5 rounds. No rifle to be loaded unless order given by officer.

Scabbards, entrenching tools, water bottles, haversacks to be left under guard at BASTION.

Countersign

The password CROW HILL to be communicated to all ranks when leaving front line and to be used by all ranks when challenged.

Telephone Wires

Any telephone wires found outside British wire defences to be cut at once.

Communications

Signals officer of 9th South Lancs to arrange for communication with CROW HILL by field telephone and lamp.

Position Of Commanding Officer

CO 9th South Lancs and Forward Liaison Officer (RFA) to direct operations from Glengarry Hill. 2 runners will be assigned by RFA as back-up method of communication with batteries.

Instructions

A list of instructions as to possible variations in operational orders will be issued to Capt. Brewer.

Medical Arrangements

ADS to be established in WESTION NULLAH

2 stretchers & 4 stretcher bearers to accompany 'A' Party.

1 stretcher & 2 stretcher bearers to accompany 'C' Party.

2 stretchers & 4 stretcher bearers to be positioned at south end of BASIN RAVINE

Prisoners

Any enemy personnel captured will be sent back to our lines under escort.

Prisoners

Any enemy personnel captured will be sent back to our lines under escort.

Additional Points

Reminder that watches must be carefully synchronized.

Everything must be done to bring in all casualties.

Half rum ration to be issued before the raid and remainder on return to lines.

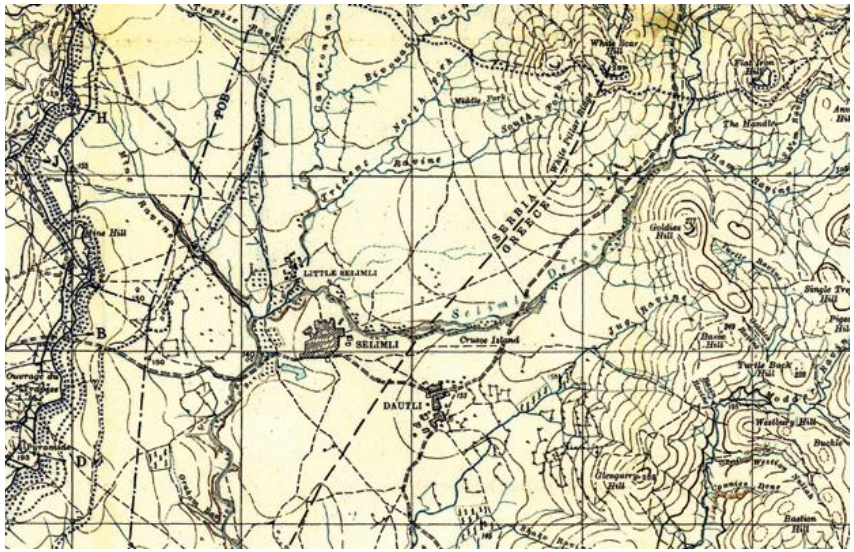
The Outcome

In the handwritten after action report by Captain Brewer the key points are as follows:

'A' Party moved off from its Assembly Point at 2150 hrs and reached position of deployment at 2255 hrs, without incident. The party rushed the villages at 2320 hrs. No contact with the enemy was made. The party remained in and around the villages for 45 minutes but nothing was seen or heard of the enemy. 'A' Party returned to the British lines at 0145 hrs. 'B' and 'C' Parties also had nothing to report. Results of raid were one telephone line cut and five stick grenades found. 'A' Party also made a reconnaissance report on the village and surrounding ravines. This indicated that the houses in the villages were not habitable and that, from the amounts of brushwood found and trampled nature of the grass, it appeared that the Bulgarians used trees south of the ravine between the two villages as their main position. The tracks through the villages appeared to be well used and the ravines were found to be shallow and offering no major obstacles to movement, allowing men to move from Selimli to within 200 yards of Dautli.

Endnotes

1. Details drawn from 22nd Division Operational Order No.27 (2-11-17) with additional information from 66th Bde Operational Order No.65 (1-11-17), 66th Bde Memo No.12 (2-11-17), 66th Brigade Note BFM 949 (4-11-17), Barrage Group Operational Order No.2 (2-11-17), 66th MGC Operational Order No.62 (ND).
2. Timings of the 2 raids were co-ordinated following a meeting between GOCs 66th & 77th Bdes. This led to the timing of the 9th South Lancs raid being pushed back by 45 minutes so as not to alert the Bulgarians ahead of the 77th Bde attack.
3. Turkish word for gully or ravine
4. Men drawn from 'B' Coy (49 ORs) & 'C' Coy (71 ORs)
5. All from 'A' Coy
6. All from 'D' Coy
7. Map reference given as 11855 / 1813
8. Crossroads at map reference 1185 / 18112
9. Map reference given as 11745 / 18178



5.14
Trench
Raid Map
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EXTRACTS FROM A LETTER FROM GENERAL SIR WILLIAM ROBERTSON (CIGS) TO LIEUTENANT-GENERAL G. F. MILNE (GOC BRITISH FORCES SALONIKA)[1]

War Office

PERSONAL

7 November 1916

This is a 'Personal' letter and therefore is not 'Official'. ….. What I wish to point out is that I must have a little private and personal communication with you sometimes. I cannot see you, and letters may sometimes take too long. With Haig the matter is quite different as he can always be seen or our Staffs meet. The reason I use 'R' telegrams is that all other telegrams go to the Secretary of State and to a host of other people, and it so happens that the Secretary of State is all out for a Balkan Campaign. My personal opinion on the matter is that we shall never win this war in the Balkans. We can only win it by defeating the German Army. We shall never find any great number of German troops in the Balkans, and therefore nothing can please the Germans better than to see us being killed by the Bulgars and our killing the Bulgars. The fewer Englishmen and Bulgars there are about the better the Germans will be pleased. We have not enough men and artillery to fight in two main theatres, and if we had they would be much better employed in one. I know you have great difficulties with the French, but everyone has and always has had. You can only make the best of it.

***

P.S. I have just received your private letter of the 27th October. It confirms what you have told me before and I quite realise the difficulties you have to contend against. But you must remember that Haig has very similar difficulties in France. In fact I think his difficulties in some respects are greater than yours. You can only make the best of things. What I am concerned about is your statement that your Army will slowly waste away from disease next summer unless you get on the other side of the mountains. You must use all your energy to keep a sound spirit up in your Command, and you may depend upon me trying my best to give you all the rewards for your troops which you may ask for and to do everything I possibly can to let them see that their services are appreciated. You must be very careful about keeping up their spirit. Maude has a similar task in Mesopotamia and he is going very well. Also remember that events are happening in other parts of the world, and that your troubles in future may be less than you might at first imagine. I hope by next summer, if the Allies will only do the right thing, that a very material change for the better will take place and that it will react upon the theatre in which you are. I have already asked you to send me occasionally an official review of the situation. This I shall circulate to the War Committee, and you should write it accordingly. In addition to this I shall be glad if you would occasionally write me private letters. Also remember that I can only look to you to see that the health and spirit of the troops are maintained. I have four campaigns on my hands besides the one in France, and unless I am told what the situation is I cannot help you. Always let me have your proposals in good time so that I can get to work at this end and prevent your troops from being wasted any more than can possibly be helped either from the enemy or from the climate. Of course the whole story is the one I have often mentioned, namely, that we have too strong a force for defence and are not strong enough for offence. To make us stronger for a real offence would mean a serious depletion in the main theatre and we must try to avoid that. So I can only look to you to do your best and I will give you all the help I can. I do not wish to know very much about your tactical arrangements. In fact the less I know about them probably the better. What I want to know is how you propose in general to continue to carry out the instructions you have received, and any proposals you may have as to the desirability of modifying those instructions. …..

Endnotes

1. The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, edited by David R Woodward , The Army Records Society, 1989 (reproduced by kind permission of David R Woodward)..

Further Reading

C. Falls, (1933 and 1935), *Official History of Military Operations in Macedonia*, Vols 1 & 2: HMSO, London reprinted by IWM and Battery Press, 1996.

A. Palmer, (1965), *The Gardeners of Salonika*: Andre Deutsch

S. Sandford, (2014), *Neither Unionist not Nationalist - The 10th (Irish) Division in the Great War*. Irish Academic Press.

Alan Wakefield & Simon Moody, (2011), *Under the Devil's Eye - The British Military Experience in Macedonia 1915-1918*: Pen and Sword, Barnsley.

26TH DIVISION IN THE DOBRUJA NOVEMBER 1918 - APRIL 1919

PEACEKEEPING

Following the signing of an armistice with Turkey on 30 October 1918, General Milne prepared to move the majority of the British Salonika Force into the Ottoman Empire to occupy the forts guarding the Dardanelles. Detached from the main British force at this point was the 26th Division, which entrained at Mustapha Pasha (now Svilengrad in Bulgaria. It is close to the border with both Turkey and Greece, opposite Adrianople (now Edirne) on the River Maritsa which is the border between Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey) and headed north to Rustchuk in Bulgaria to join the Army of the Danube under General Franchet d'Esperey. With this force the French commander planned to drive German and Austro-Hungarian forces from Romania and push north into Hungary with the aim of joining newly formed Czechoslovak national forces for an invasion of Germany. The signing of an armistice with Germany on 11 November negated the need for such grandiose strategy and instead d'Esperey's troops found themselves engaged as an occupation force in Bulgaria and undertaking a peacekeeping role in the Dobruja, a region long disputed between Bulgaria and Romania[1].

Seized by Romania following Bulgarian defeat in the Second Balkan War of 1913 and then taken back by the Bulgarians in 1916, the Dobruja was to be returned to Romania as part of the post-war peace settlement. The contentious issue was just how the predominantly Bulgarian and Turkish population would react to the re-imposition of Romanian administration. The task facing British, French and Italian troops was to ensure a peaceful handover and secure the lower Danube as a trade route. The 26th Division based itself at Rustchuk on the Danube and sent detached battalions to towns including Balcik, Dobric and Silistra. Accommodated in former Bulgarian barracks, schools, hotels and larger private houses, the troops were soon on good terms with the local population who saw the British as a bulwark against Romanian oppression. Initial tasks included monitoring the passage of Bulgarian army units through the region en-route home for demobilization. The 11th Worcesters and 7th Royal Berkshires at Dobric were especially busy manning control points on main roads to prevent the Bulgarians herding livestock towards the border. In addition a standing guard of 50 men from the 7th Royal Berkshires searched all trains arriving at Dobric for contraband and unauthorized passengers[2].

The task facing 26th Division became more problematic in January 1919 as Romanian gendarmes arrived in towns and villages across the Dobruja, replacing the village police force raised from amongst the local population. British patrols stepped up their search for and confiscation of weapons. On numerous occasions small parties of British troops, usually comprising a junior officer and between 20 - 25 men, were sent to villages to quell disturbances and opposition to the gendarmes. At Teke, detachments from the 7th Ox & Bucks Light Infantry came to the rescue of gendarmes besieged in the local school by stone throwing villagers[3]. To increase the mobility of patrols some battalions established mounted squads from amongst men of their transport section and others within the unit who could ride. Such mounted troops proved invaluable as reinforcements that could be deployed quickly to assist in situations such as that at Teke. In March 1919 motor transport was used to move a detachment of two officers and forty-six infantrymen, including four Lewis gun teams, along with two field guns, to assist gendarmes in countering a feared cross border attack by a well armed force of Bulgarian reservists[4]. No action resulted from this operation and British preparations to deal with reported armed bands of Bulgarian Bolsheviks at Silistra met with similar results. In April 1919 battalions of Italian infantry relieved 26th Division. Units moved to Varna on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast from where a composite brigade of three battalions quickly left for Egypt. In early May the remaining units embarked for the Caucasus to join the British Army of the Black Sea.

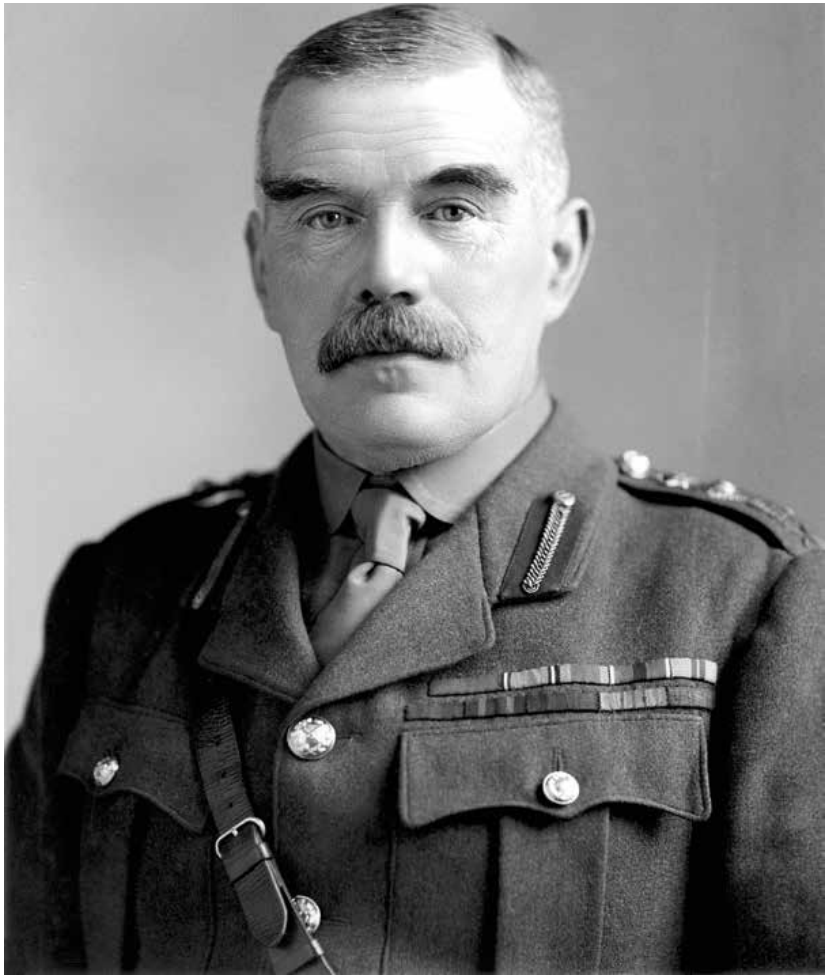
The work undertaken in the Dobruja is a forgotten footnote of the First World War and was a difficult task for officers and men with no training or experience of peacekeeping operations. The role was played out against a backdrop of diminishing government support as Secretary of State for War, Winston Churchill, believed all available British troops should be supporting White Russian forces against the Bolsheviks. By January 1919 all battalions of 26th Division were reduced to two companies as a constant flow of men left for demobilisation. This made it increasingly difficult to maintain sufficient troops on the ground as a credible force. Matters were made worse by the Spanish flu epidemic and winter weather conditions which led to cases of frostbite. At such times detachments were snowed in at remote villages and communications with brigade and divisional HQs were extremely limited. In the worst conditions even the supply barges on the Danube failed to reach Rustchuk and Silistra for up to two weeks at a time. The task became increasingly monotonous for the troops, especially as most men simply wanted to go home. Morale was raised through dances involving local townsfolk, concert parties and sport including a divisional football league. Despite relief at leaving the Balkans behind there was also pride at having accomplished the task:

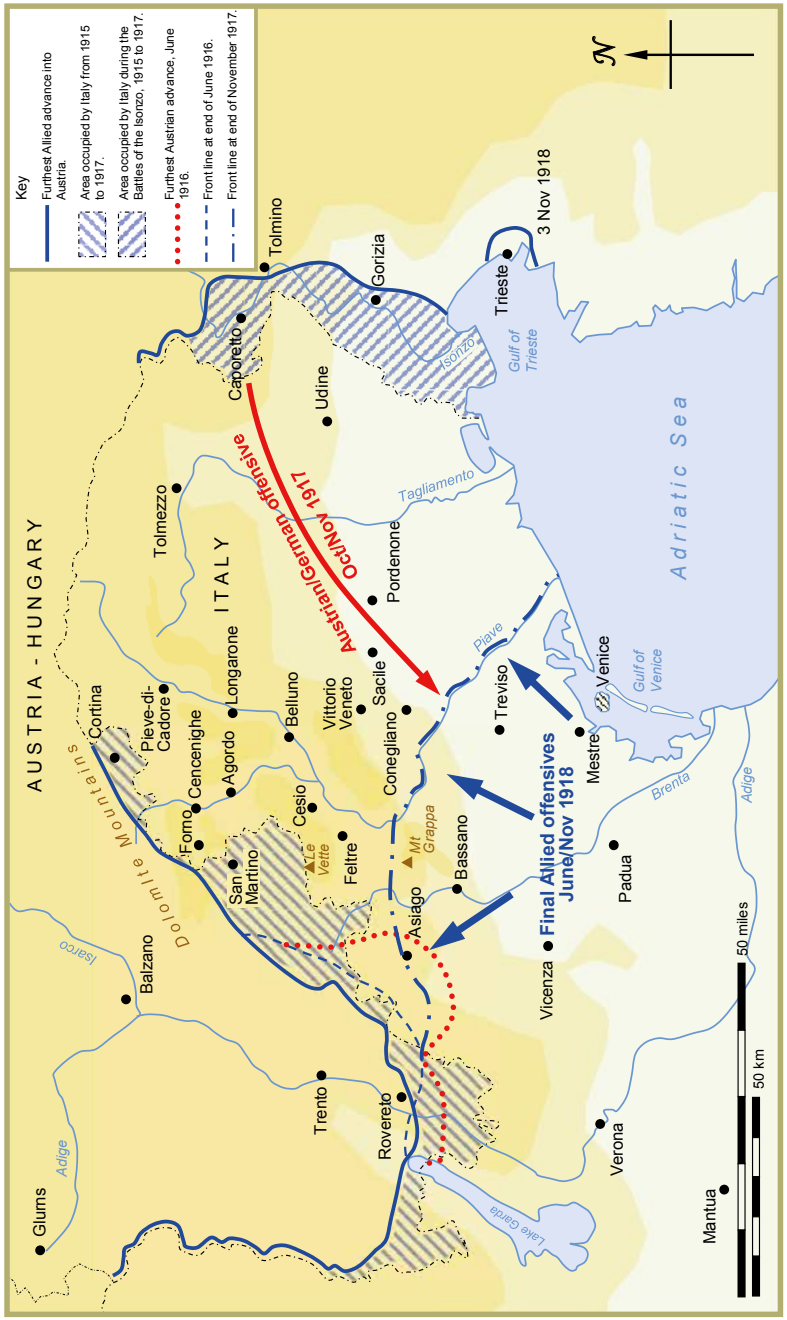
'It was a justifiable pride that one felt when a village priest would come and implore for one or two of our men to be posted to his village, just because they stood for what this harassed corner of the Balkans so sorely needed. It is a great thing, too, that one can say, that they practised what they stood for.'
(Captain Stukeley, 7th Ox & Bucks Light Infantry)[5]

Endnotes

1. For a full account of Anglo-French strategic differences in the region see Falls, C. Military Operations Macedonia, Vol 2 (HMSO, London, 1935), p.254-267.
2. Chapman, J. Friends & Enemies - The 7th Battalion, Princess Charlotte of Wales (Royal Berkshire) Regiment in the Great War, (Goosecroft Publications, Purley on Thames, 2012). Includes a number of operational reports copied from the battalion's war diary.
3. Wheeler, Lt Col C (ed). Memorial Record of the Seventh (Service) Battalion The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, (Blackwell, Oxford, 1921), p.172. Recounted in a chapter on the battalion's time in the Dobruja by Captain A T W Stukeley.
4. The force was comprised of 2 officers and 36 men, including 4 Lewis gun teams, of the 7th Royal Berkshires, 10 other ranks from the 11th Worcesters and 2 18-pounder field guns from 'A' Battery, 116th Brigade, RFA. Operational orders and a report by Major J B Marks OC Detachment are reproduced in Friends & Enemies, p.175-176.
5. Memorial Record, p.180

5.15 General Sir William Robertson, CIGS © NPG





Map 6.1 The Italian Front 1915-1918

6. Italy

Lieutenant Colonel Paolo Capanni RAMC

	North East Italy Campaign	
Commanders	**Allied**	**Austrian and German**
	British General Sir Herbert Plumer (November 1917 - March 1918) General The Earl of Cavan (from March 1918) **Italian** General Luigi Cadorna (until November 1917) General Armando Diaz (from November 1917) **French** General Marie Émile Fayolle (November 1917 - February 1918), General Jean Graziani (from March 1918)	Field Marshal Archduke Eugen (until December 1917) Field Marshal Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf (until July 1918) Field Marshal Svetozar Boroević von Bojna (from December 1917)
Forces	**British** XI Corps (5th, 7th and 48th Divisions): Lieutenant General Sir Richard Haking (until March 1918) XIV Corps (23rd and 41st Divisions): Lieutenant General The Earl of Cavan (until XIV Corps became GHQ Italy April 1918) Re-formed XIV Corps (7th and 23rd Divisions): Lieutenant General Sir James Babington (from October 1918) **Italian** First Army, Second Army, Third Army, Fourth Army, Sixth Army, Seventh Army, Eighth Army, Ninth Army, Tenth Army, Twelfth Army **French** Tenth Army (6 Divisions).	**Group of Armies on the South Western Front** Field Marshal Archduke Eugen German Fourteenth Army, First Isonzo Army, Second Isonzo Army, Isonzo Command Reserve Group of Armies on the Trentino Front Field Marshal Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf Tenth Army, Eleventh Army **Following Reorganisation in December 1917** Field Marshal Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf's Group of Armies (General-Colonel Archduke Joseph from July 1918, Field Marshal Alexander Freiherr von Krobatin from October 1918) Tenth Army, Eleventh Army Field Marshal Svetozar Boroević von Bojna's Group of Armies Sixth Army - Isonzo Army, Army Group Belluno

Context	Italy had entered the War against Austria in May 1915, and (despite only limited success) declared war on Germany on 29 August 1916. A few British artillery batteries deployed to Italy in April 1917. However, it was the Italian defeat at the Battle of Caporetto (24 October - 12 November 1917), which threatened to knock Italy out of the War, that resulted in the deployment of much larger numbers of British (and French) troops. These troops fought alongside the Italians until the Armistice.	Austria had achieved some success in preventing Italy from achieving territorial gains in the north east of the Italian peninsula and around the Adriatic. German assistance helped the Austrian army secure a major breakthrough at Caporetto, although logistic demands and command confusion prevented its exploitation. Steady attrition of the Austrian army, along with operational defeat at the Battle of the Piave (15 - 23 June 1918), resulted in its total defeat at the Battle of Vittorio Veneto (23 October - 3 November 1918).
Casualties	**British** 2,391 **Italian** 1,937,000 **French** 3,000	1,611,000
Consequences	Achievement of nearly all intended territorial gains by Italy, although these were ultimately not realised by the Treaty of Versailles (1919).	Defeat of the Austrian Army and collapse of the Austrian Empire.

Introduction

Almost all Italy's 375 mile frontier with Austria[1] was guarded by the Alps, with only 20 miles of relatively flat ground in the east, along the Isonzo River, suitable for large-scale operations. By the end of 1916, the Italians had launched no fewer than nine battles along the Isonzo Front, and repulsed one Austrian offensive on the Trentino Front (in the west), but had gained very little. In early 1917, the operational situation was stalemate.

The British Assessment

In late March 1917, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir William Robertson visited the Comando Supremo[2] at Udine. He spent a quiet two days at the Isonzo Front, describing it as 'nothing doing'. Robertson was largely impressed by the roads, hospital arrangements, accommodation, logistics, and the quality of the Italian soldiers. However, he was considerably less impressed by the Comando Supremo, General Luigi Cadorna, and of the five army commanders that he met, and judged only the King of Italy's cousin, Lieutenant General the Duke of Aosta, to be adequate.

However, what disturbed Robertson most of all was the Army Commanders' dread of the possibility of a German attack, describing some of them as 'already half-beaten'. His assessment would prove to be the springboard for the deployment of the first British troops to Italy.

The First British Deployment

On 7 April 1917, ten newly raised 6-inch howitzer batteries (totalling 40 howitzers) under Brigadier-General P. D. Hamilton arrived in Italy, and were attached to the Italian Third Army, commanded by Aosta. Most of the British guns were in position within hours of arrival. Given that the Third Army already had some 800 heavy guns, effectively the British provided an augmentation of around 5 per cent. When compared to the Italian army as a whole, which had some 1,900 heavy guns, the British figure amounted to only a little over two per cent.

The British artillery was divided into two equal artillery groups. Its first major action was the Tenth Battle of the Isonzo, which began on 12 May 1917. Group B2 was engaged mainly from 12 to 17 May, with Group B1 engaged mainly in support of the final Italian offensive from 23 to 26 May. In his report following the battle, Hamilton was very satisfied with the performance of both his artillery groups, although he did refer to shortcomings in the performance of the Italian artillery. Nevertheless, this small initial deployment had gone well, and British troops had fought successfully alongside their allies on Italian soil for the first time.

The British artillery was reinforced by a further six batteries in July 1917, and one further howitzer in August. It performed so well during the Eleventh Battle of the Isonzo in August that Cadorna requested Robertson to send more guns and ammunition to Italy. Cadorna valued highly the British artillery under his command. He declared complete confidence in the development of events. His confidence would rapidly prove unfounded.

The Battle of Caporetto[3]

At 0200 on 24 October 1917, the combined Austrian and German Armies commenced a massive bombardment all along the Isonzo Front. At 0800 the infantry attack began, and by early evening the town of Caporetto had fallen into German hands. That same evening the Italian Government appealed to the British for help. By 9 November, the Italians had been pushed back to a new defensive line along the Asiago Plateau, Mount

6.1 Kaiser Wilhelm II (front left) in Udine, town captured during the Battle of Caporetto © IWM

Grappa and the Piave River. The scale of their defeat had been staggering. Almost 700,000 men lost, although only 40,000 killed or wounded, the remainder either captured or deserted.

The British Response

The British response was swift and decisive. On 27 October 1917, Robertson directed Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in France and Belgium, to prepare a corps of two divisions for despatch to Italy, in order to improve the morale of the Italian Army and prevent the total collapse of Italy. The following day, Haig nominated Lieutenant General The Earl of Cavan as corps commander.

Cavan, on arriving at the Comando Supremo on 6 November 1917, met Cadorna, whom he described as 'cool, unmoved, clear-headed'. Cavan was adamant that 'The wonderful recovery of the Italian Army, the heroic action of the Italian cavalry in Friuli, and the stubborn defence of the Italian Third Army, under the Duke of Aosta' had provided his (and French) troops sufficient time to deploy. Fortunately, the British artillery had managed to retreat in good order with most of the remainder of the Third Army. Nevertheless, it remained clear that the Italians were largely unaided in their efforts to save themselves from total collapse.

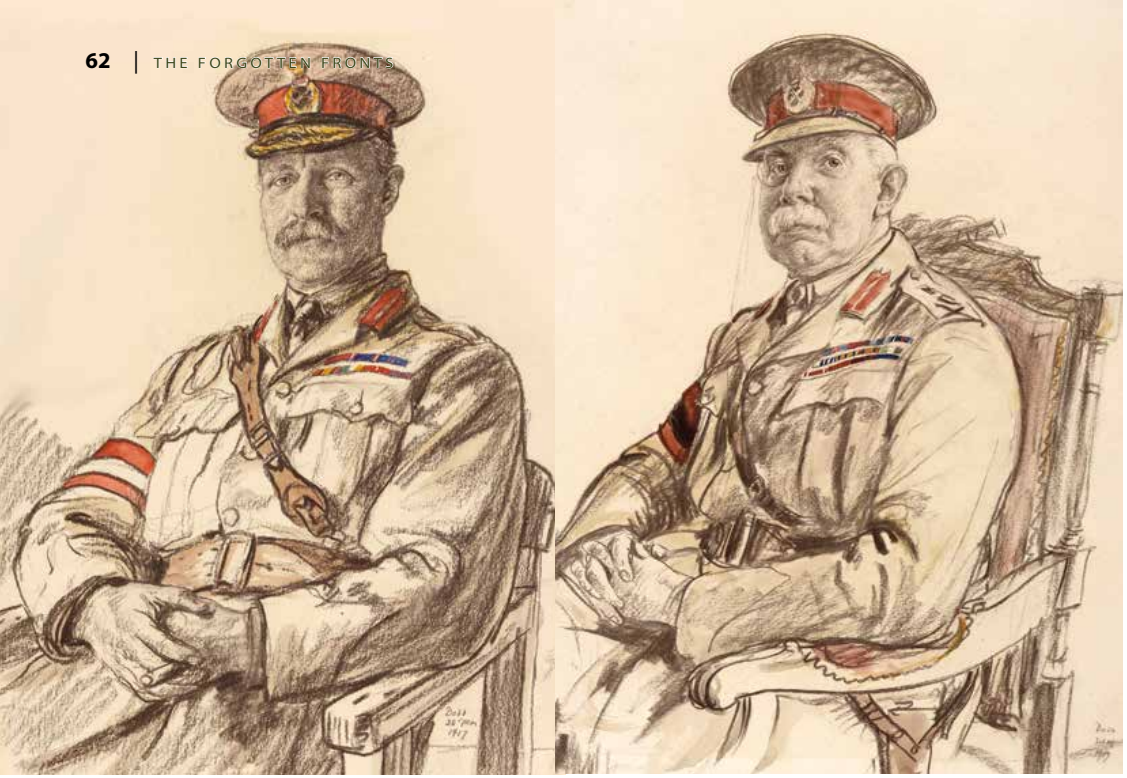
6.2 A 6" 26 cwt howitzer being positioned by troops of the 293rd Siege Battery, RGA - Italian Front © IWM

From 5 to 7 November 1917, the British prime minister David Lloyd George, along with the French and Italian prime ministers, plus their senior military staff, met at Rapallo, near Genoa. It was agreed to deploy a total of twelve Allied divisions to Italy, and to establish a Supreme War Council with power to ensure effective unity (this would become known as the Versailles Council). There was also unanimity that Cadorna must be replaced. On 9 November General Armando Diaz, previously a corps commander in the Third Army, succeeded him as Comando Supremo, thus effectively leapfrogging Aosta[4]. Diaz's senior deputy was the youthful General Pietro Badoglio. Lloyd George, by sheer dynamism and persistence, had completely dominated the Rapallo Conference. His strategic vision had set the Allies on the path to changing the course of the war in Italy.

The Second British Deployment

Robertson's direction to Cavan could hardly have been plainer. 'Look here Cavan my lad, you've got to go to Italy and put new heart into our Allies. I don't know what the situation may be when you get there, but make sure of your line of retreat if things are very bad.'

Cavan clearly faced an uphill task. Nevertheless, the arrival of the British divisions certainly appeared to boost the morale of the Italians, or at the very least, the civilian population. When the trains stopped at Genoa on the 5th Division's 'triumphal journey' from France, a great crowd had assembled 'to welcome the British heroes' and the troops were decked out with flags



6.3 Lieutenant-General The Earl of Cavan 6.4 General Sir Herbert Plumer - Francis Dodd © IWM

and roses and given coffee and cigarettes. The 7th Division was also greeted by cheering crowds at the stations, who brought presents of fruit and flowers whilst displaying 'unbounded enthusiasm'. By 1 December 1917 a total of five divisions had deployed; 5th and 7th (both regular army divisions), 23rd and 41st (both 'New Army' divisions) and 48th (Territorial Force), plus two corps Headquarters; XI and XIV. A total of six French divisions deployed during the same period.

Lloyd George's decision to increase the number of British divisions to five prompted him to select General Sir Herbert Plumer as Commander in Chief of the enlarged British Army in Italy. On 13 November 1917, Plumer arrived at the British General Headquarters in Mantua to replace Cavan, who remained as Commander XIV Corps.

Plumer's Command

Plumer was surprised at how little the Italians had learned about modern warfare, and immediately set out to teach by example. Italian trench systems were rudimentary, with shelters of the 1914 pattern rather than shellproof dugouts. Every effort was therefore made to organize the British sector as a model. Much work was done to strengthen and deepen defences, by both improving existing defences and digging new trenches. With progress clearly being made, Plumer invited Diaz to visit the British sector. Following this visit, Plumer was soon able to report improvements in the Italian defences throughout other parts of the line.

Communication presented an immediate difficulty, as few British officers or men could speak Italian. Few Italian officers could speak English, but a remarkable number of Italian soldiers had picked up English in the United States, and served as unofficial interpreters. Plumer also made sure that all British general staff publications and lessons learned were translated into Italian. He was clearly at pains to ensure that the limited communication between Allies should in no way hamper the conduct of operations.

The Italian approach to staff work was poor. Headquarters generally closed down from noon to 1500 every day, even when operations were going badly, although a similar routine by the Austrian staff tended to even things out a bit. Although easy to work with, the Italians' knowledge of staff work was theoretical, not practical, often assuming that once issued an order was as good as done.

Again teaching by example, Plumer ensured daily visits by his formation commanders and their staff to the Italian lines. The Italians responded well, increasing the frequency of their visits to their own lines, and requesting advice on training matters from the British. Despite this progress, the British failed to improve the Italian approach to the issuing and execution of orders, or even to induce the Italian staff to introduce basic staff procedures such as the allotment of roads to vehicle convoys and the synchronisation of watches. Considerable British input had generated only very limited success.

The Process of Reconstruction

Plumer assessed the Italian Army's performance as below standard in several areas. Weakest was the artillery, whose higher commanders lacked knowledge and energy. There was inadequate co-operation with the infantry who, not surprisingly, had little confidence in their artillery support. He assessed the Italian engineers as 'probably the finest in Europe', but severely hampered by the lack of higher training and professional engineering knowledge of their officers. He believed the Italian infantry soldiers to be 'excellent material', but that their officers lacked the necessary training, particularly in leadership, to gain the confidence of their men. Plumer had no opportunity to assess the Italian cavalry, but presumed that its success in stemming the Austro-German advance after Caporetto was sufficient proof of its efficiency.

The Italians had practically no regulations for the control of civilian populations, counter-espionage or censorship. The Italian intelligence system was therefore rapidly reorganised, and by end of 1917 the intelligence branch at British General Headquarters (now at Padua) was in very close touch with the Italian intelligence section through the British Mission at the Comando Supremo. The Italian telegraph and telephone system was also thoroughly reorganised.

The new partnership of Diaz and Badoglio was already engaged in reforming and reconstructing the Italian army. Tactical doctrine was standardised, with infantry tactics becoming centred on firepower, rather than manpower, and with better coordination with the artillery. Pay, rations and leave entitlement were improved, with a free life insurance policy given to each soldier. The Italian soldiers' morale rose as they finally achieved equality with the soldiers of other armies. The presence of the British and French would have contributed to these improvements, but defeat at Caporetto had been the catalyst, and a revitalised Comando Supremo the key driver.

Training the Italians

In Plumer's opinion, the Italian commanders were failing to appreciate the necessity of devoting enough time to really strenuous practical training. In January 1918, the British established a central training school at Praglia Monastery, near Padua. Its purpose was to instil good doctrine and practice into the Italian army.

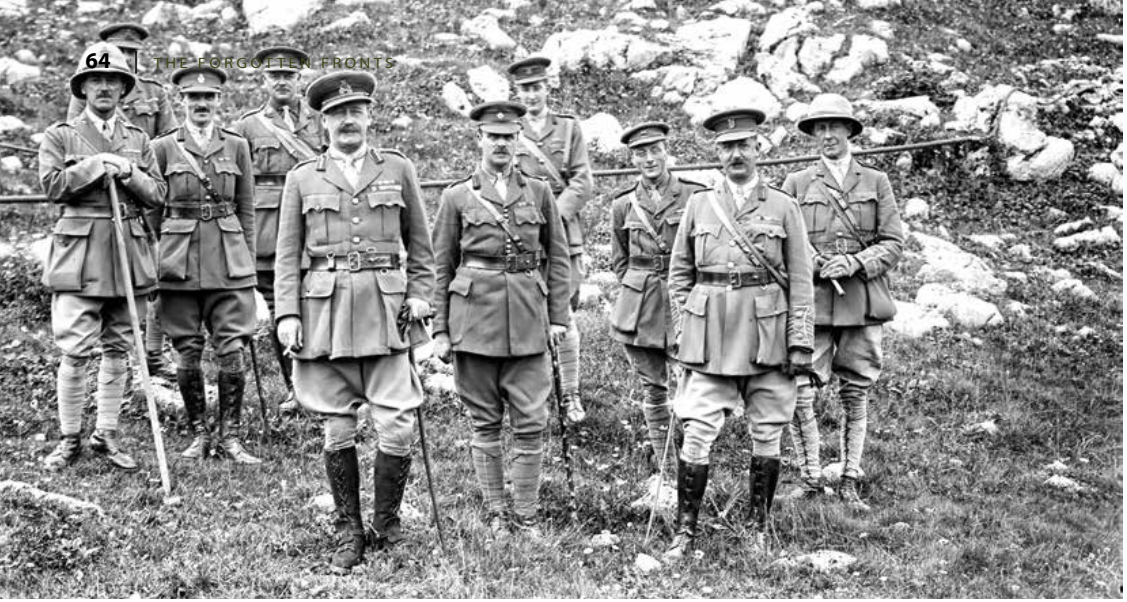
Training at the Corps Gas School was rigorous and realistic. The Italian masks were replaced by superior British masks, a total of 2,000,000 eventually being procured for the Italian Army. Training in basic infantry tactics also helped perfect Italian skills in close-quarter fighting. Instruction was provided in the use of trench mortars, and a practical trial demonstrated the unquestionable superiority of the Lewis gun against an Austrian machine gun.

Despite this, after training the Italians for several months, British GHQ was obliged to report that 'Every effort had been made to assist the Italian Army in the improvement of their training. This has met with some success, but not as much as might be hoped for. In consequence it cannot be said that the troops have, according to our ideas, attained a high standard as regards training'. On 29 May 1918, British GHQ was informed of the Italian decision to withdraw its troops from the British schools. Cavan deplored this decision, but was unable to persuade Badoglio to reverse it. Considerable British input into training the Italians had achieved only limited success.

Military Action

In January 1918, British troop levels peaked at 113,759. Even this figure amounts to only a little over two per cent of the 5,230,000 men mobilised by Italy during the war, almost all of whom served within Italy itself. Despite the peak in troop numbers, Plumer's command witnessed comparatively little military action. The 7th Division saw practically no action at all in Italy during 1917, and even its tenure of the right of the Montello Hill

6.5 Soldiers of the Royal Army Service Corps outside a Field Ambulance Station. Note extensive use of sand bags for building protection © IWM



6.6 Major General Thomas Herbert Shoubridge, the Commander of the 7th Division (fifth from the left), and his staff © IWM

on the Piave line from January to March 1918, after it relieved the 41st Division, was described as 'singularly uneventful', with casualties 'incredibly low'.

The 23rd Division, holding the left of the Montello, saw slightly more action in December 1917, with 31 other ranks killed. This reduced significantly in January 1918, and by the time the 23rd Division was relieved by the 41st Division in February 1918, operations had 'assumed a calmer aspect'. The 48th Division, which held the right of the Montello for only two weeks after relieving the 7th Division on 2 March 1918, enjoyed 'the most quiet time imaginable' at the front. The 5th Division, on departing Italy in early April 1918, lamented the end of 'a very happy interlude in their experiences of the Great War'. Despite some quick and accurate Austrian artillery fire and sniping during reliefs in place, the policy of the Austrians during this period was accurately described by an officer of the 41st Division as one of 'live and let live'.

On 30 December 1917 the French, aided by British batteries, recaptured Mount Tomba and took over 1,500 prisoners. By January 1918 air superiority had been achieved, with successful bombing missions being conducted by the Royal Flying Corps throughout February. The British, by a process of steady attrition, were beginning to wear down the Austrians.

On 15 February 1918, the British War Cabinet discussed a letter which it had received from the French General Ferdinand Foch, President of the Allied Executive War Board (which had been set up by the Supreme War Council). The letter pointed out the superiority of enemy forces on the Western Front, and of Allied forces on the Italian Front. As a result on 18 February 1918, Plumer received instructions to send two divisions (5th and 41st) back to France, and the following day instructions to return to France himself with the bulk of his headquarters plus Headquarters XI Corps. Plumer handed command back to Cavan on 10 March. The transfer of the two British divisions, along with four (of the six) French divisions, was ultimately hastened by the German offensive on the Western Front, which began on 21 March.

Although quiet, Plumer's tenure in command was remarkably successful. A consummate diplomat, he enjoyed an excellent relationship with Diaz, and by treating the Italians as equals, he simultaneously gained their confidence and restored their confidence in themselves. Plumer's advice, teaching and above all his leadership had been crucial to the restoration of Italian morale, reconstructing the Italian army and improving the Italian system of defences. They had also laid firm foundations for the British army's operational success in Italy later in 1918.

Cavan's Command

No sooner had Cavan re-assumed command than XIV Corps, now comprising the three remaining British divisions (7th, 23rd and 48th), began to occupy new positions on the Asiago Plateau, situated far to the west of those previously held on the Montello. XIV Corps was attached to the newly formed Italian Sixth Army, commanded by Lieutenant General Luca Montuori.

The British pursued an aggressive policy right from the start. The 23rd Division (on the right) commenced raiding on 29 March 1918, when a platoon of the 11th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters attacked an Austrian post, taking three prisoners and killing the remainder. Following reconnaissance patrols, the 7th Division (on the left) began raiding on 7 April, when the 1st Battalion The Royal Welch Fusiliers rushed the Austrian trenches, killing 17 and taking one prisoner, sustaining 'trifling casualties' in the process. Raiding continued until relieved by the 48th Division in May, with many raw and inexperienced troops gaining valuable experience and confidence. The newly formed Royal Air Force continued to destroy enemy aircraft, bomb enemy positions, and dominate the skies. The British were sustaining the process of attrition, and the morale of the Austrian army was beginning to crumble.

The Battle of the Piave[5]

By June 1918, the opposing forces on the Italian Front were fairly evenly matched, the Allies enjoying a very marginal numerical superiority in divisions (58 to 55), and guns (7,542 to 6,833). On the Asiago Plateau, the 23rd Division held the right of the British line and the 48th Division the left, with the 7th Division in reserve. Opposite the British were five Austrian divisions, part of Field Marshal Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf's Group of Armies. In Conrad's opinion, the British were 'clinging to the rim of the plateau by their finger tips. Chop off their fingers and down they would fall'.

6.7 Major William George Barker VC DSO* MC**, the temporary commander of No. 28 Squadron, beside his Sopwith Camel © IWM

At 0300 on 15 June 1918, the Austrians commenced bombardment of the entire British front lines and reserve areas. The infantry attack was launched at 0700, although it developed rather later in some sectors. Warned of the impending attack by a deserter captured during the night, the British divisions were readied to meet it. It would become known as the 'Battle in the Woods and Clouds'.

The Austrian artillery fire was unregistered, and was consequently very dispersed and inaccurate. It provided negligible support for their infantry. The daylight revealed many Austrian batteries out in the open, and these were rapidly neutralised by the British guns.

6.8 Captured Austrian Artillery at Campolongo, Asiago Plateau © IWM

On the British right, the 23rd Division successfully checked the initial Austrian assault. Then, following a report that the enemy had succeeded in penetrating the line at the inter-divisional boundary, the 11th Battalion The Northumberland Fusiliers responded by throwing a defensive flank towards the Boscon Switch. At the same time, the Austrians had succeeded in occupying part of the front line trench held by the 11th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters, and were working their way up the San Sisto ridge. An immediate counter-attack by the Sherwood Foresters drove the enemy off the ridge, and subsequent counter-attacks by the brigade reserve re-established the divisional line by 13.30hrs. Second Lieutenant John Youll of the Northumberland Fusiliers and Lieutenant Colonel Charles Hudson, the Commanding Officer of the Sherwood Foresters, would each win the Victoria Cross in a highly successful day's fighting for the Division.

Diminished in strength by influenza, the 48th Division was experiencing more difficulty in its fight on the British left. The Austrians had succeeded in breaching the line on the divisional right, but were held up by fire from the Lemerle Switch (and by the defensive flank of the Northumberland Fusiliers). In the centre, however, the enemy successfully penetrated the line held by the 1/5th Battalion The Royal Warwickshire Regiment and the 1/5th Battalion The Gloucestershire Regiment. By midday, the Austrians were in possession of around 3,000 yards of the front line, and a pocket (or re-entrant) within the Cesuna Switch stretching 1,000 yards. Successive counter-attacks were launched throughout the remainder of the day and the following morning, but it was not until 0815 on 16 June 1918 that the whole of the Divisional front line was regained.

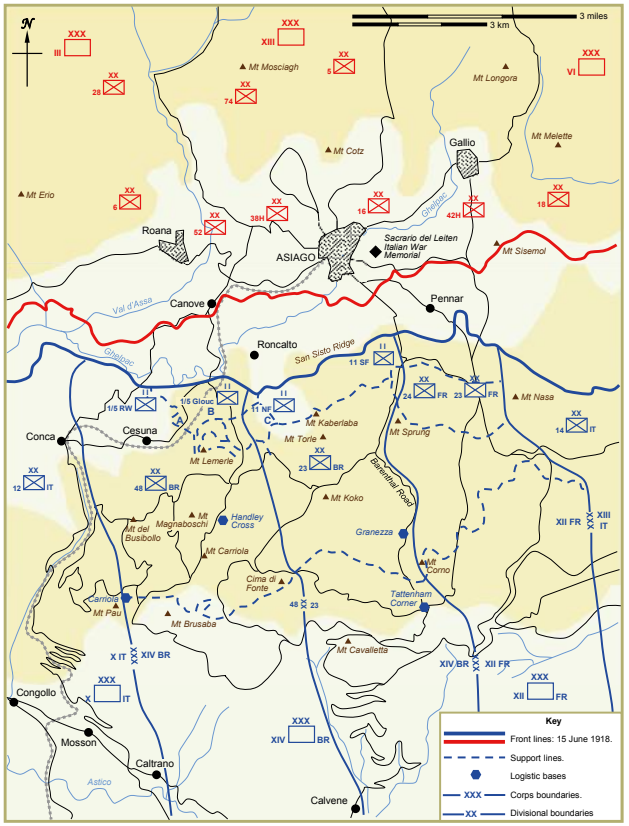
Austrian losses have been estimated as being at least 2,400. British losses were around 1,500. Eager to fully exploit his success, Cavan was greatly disappointed when Diaz declined to give permission for the British to press forward the attack. He was convinced that a great opportunity had been lost.

Further east, Austrian Field Marshal Svetozar Boroević von Bojna's group of armies initially enjoyed considerable success against the Italians. By the end of 15 June 1918 several bridgeheads had been secured on the right bank of the Piave, and these were enlarged on 17 June. However, torrential rains then brought the Piave into flood, washing many of the enemy's bridges away, with those remaining being constantly bombed by British and Italian aviators. By 23 June, a series of vigorous Italian counter-attacks had thrown the Austrians back across the Piave, with small but significant Italian gains. Austrian losses were around 69,000 casualties and 50,000 captured (mostly on the Piave); total Italian losses were around 85,000. Such figures dwarfed those from the British front on the Asiago.

The Battle of the Piave would be the last offensive in the history of the Austrian empire. With the Austrian manpower shortage now critical, by ensuring their continued attrition the Allies would soon be able to reverse the course of the war in Italy.

▲ 6.10 - Tezze British Cemetery, north of Venice. Soldiers killed during the Passage of the Piave are buried here © John Wilson

◄ 6.9 The Dolomites, a Watercolour by Major E H Shepard MC RGA © Shepard Trust (James Campbell)



Map 6.2 The Battle of the Piave: The Fighting on the Asiago Plateau 15 - 16 June 1918

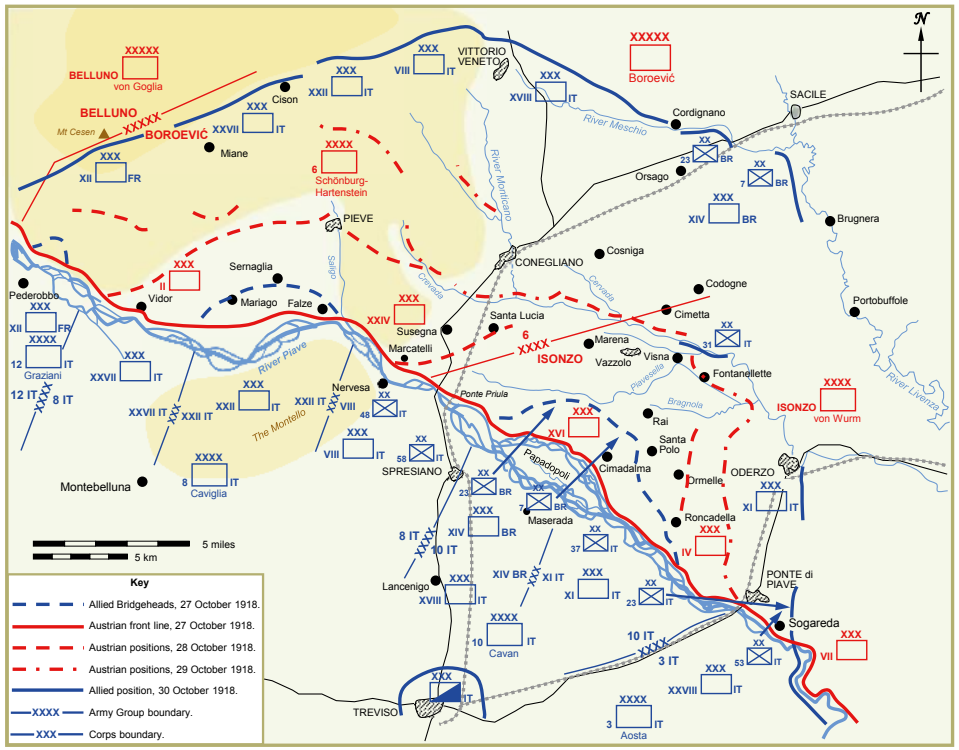
The Long Pause

Following the battle, British raiding of Austrian positions continued to be vigorously prosecuted. On the night of 8/9 August 1918, the 7th and 48th Divisions carried out eight simultaneous raids, capturing 355 prisoners, 10 machine guns and 3 trench mortars. During the 7th Division's raids, the Austrians sustained 'very heavy' casualties, to the Division's 120 or so. The 48th Division sustained 70 casualties. Further raids on the night of 26/27 August by the 23rd and 48th Divisions took 275 prisoners and 4 machine guns.

On 9 October 1918, Cavan assumed command of the newly formed Italian Tenth Army, comprising the British XIV Corps (7th and 23rd Divisions), and the Italian XI Corps (23rd and 37th Divisions), which took positions along the Piave. This was a singular honour for Cavan, reflecting the confidence placed in him by Diaz. The 48th Division remained with the Italian Sixth Army on the Asiago.

The Battle of Vittorio Veneto

On 12 October 1918, Diaz held a conference of his Army commanders at the Comando Supremo near Padua. His intent was to begin an offensive as soon as possible. The plan would involve the Italian Tenth Army, now commanded by Cavan, spearheading the crossing of the Piave. It would then advance some 12



Map 6.3 The Battle of Vittorio Veneto: The Breakthrough on the Piave 27 - 29 October 1918

miles to the Livenza River, whilst protecting the right flank of the combined advance of the Italian Eighth, Tenth and Twelfth Armies. The Italian Sixth Army (with the British 48th Division) would initially hold, and then advance on, the Asiago. With a divisional total of 60, the Allies were practically equal to the Austrians, who had 61. The Allies, however, had 7,700 guns to the Austrians' 6,030, with the latter's total of around 1,800 heavy guns only half the Italian total.

The Piave was around 1½ miles in breadth, consisting of numerous channels dotted with islands. The largest of these islands was the Grave di Papadopoli, around 3 miles long by 1 mile broad, and held by the Austrians as an advanced post. The river was fast flowing, and by 21 October 1918, in full flood. The task of capturing the Grave di Papadopoli would fall to the 7th Division, the initial assault being led by three companies of the 1st/2nd Battalion The Honourable Artillery Company, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel (later General Sir) Richard O'Connor.

Starting at around 0700 on 23 October 1918, O'Connor's men were ferried across the Piave in 12 gondola-like boats, each crewed by two Italian Pontieri (watermen) and carrying seven soldiers. The crossing was a slow and dangerous process but, in the words of an officer of the Gordon Highlanders, the Pontieri 'were as cool under heavy shellfire as if they had been rowing on the Grand Canal'. It was hugely successful. By 0500 on 24 October O'Connor's men, reinforced by three companies of the 1st Battalion The Royal Welch Fusiliers, had secured their objectives, capturing nearly 300 Austrian prisoners in the process.

By 2100 on 26 October 1918, the conquest of the Grave di Papadopoli had been completed, an Austrian counter-attack successfully repulsed, and a footbridge constructed to the island. At 06.45hrs the following morning, the Tenth Army began to attack the enemy defences on the left bank of the Piave, successfully gaining and holding a large bridgehead. Bridging of the Piave continued throughout, although with great difficulty due to the strong current and the action of enemy aircraft.

Assisted from 27 October 1918 by the Italian 31st Division (which included the 332nd American Regiment), and from 27 to 29 October by the Italian XVIII Corps, the Tenth Army reached the Monticano River on 29 October. That evening and the following morning it defeated the last serious enemy resistance, and began the rout of the Austrian Army. On 30 October the Livenza was reached. The Tagliamento River was crossed on 3 November, and by the time the Armistice came into effect at 1500 on 4 November, the Tenth Army had captured over 35,000 prisoners and over 240 guns.

On the Asiago Plateau, the attack of the 48th Division was launched at 0545 on 1 November 1918. This was a complete success, and by the end of the day the division had captured some 3,000 enemy prisoners and several hundred guns. At dawn on 2 November the attack was resumed, and at dusk troops of 143 Brigade crossed the Austrian frontier. By 3 November the Division had advanced over 60 kilometres, sustaining fewer than 200 casualties, and continued its advance right up until the Armistice came into effect.

Defeat at Vittorio Veneto sounded the death knell for the Austrian Empire and its Army. In the final 36 hours of the battle, 300,000 Austrian troops and over 5,000 guns were captured. The British XIV Corps, whose two divisions comprised one-thirtieth of the Allied total, accounted for over 28,000 prisoners and 219 guns.

6.10 The Piave River in Summer looking towards the Grave di Papadopoli © Paolo Capanni

6.11 Released Italian prisoners in Camporovere village 1918 or 1919 - Major EH Shepard MC RGA © E H Shepard Trust

Commentary

The British campaign in Italy from 1917 to 1918 was highly successful. The British army performed superbly, and with the exception of the temporary Austrian penetration on the first day of the Battle of the Piave, overwhelming tactical success was the British norm. In Plumer and Cavan, it also possessed two excellent commanders in chief.

Given the number of troops deployed, British achievements were disproportionately high. However, these troops amounted to only a tiny percentage of an Italian Army that was steadily improving. Furthermore, any improvements that the British succeeded in making to the Italian Army were likely to have been small in comparison to those achieved by a revitalised Comando Supremo under Diaz and Badoglio.

It was principally by restoring the morale of the Italian Army that the British helped achieve operational success on the Southern Front. Their continued example was instrumental in assisting the Italians to secure the defeat of the Austrians and final victory.

Further Reading

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Thompson, Mark, *The White War: Life and Death on the Italian Front 1915-1919* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 2008).

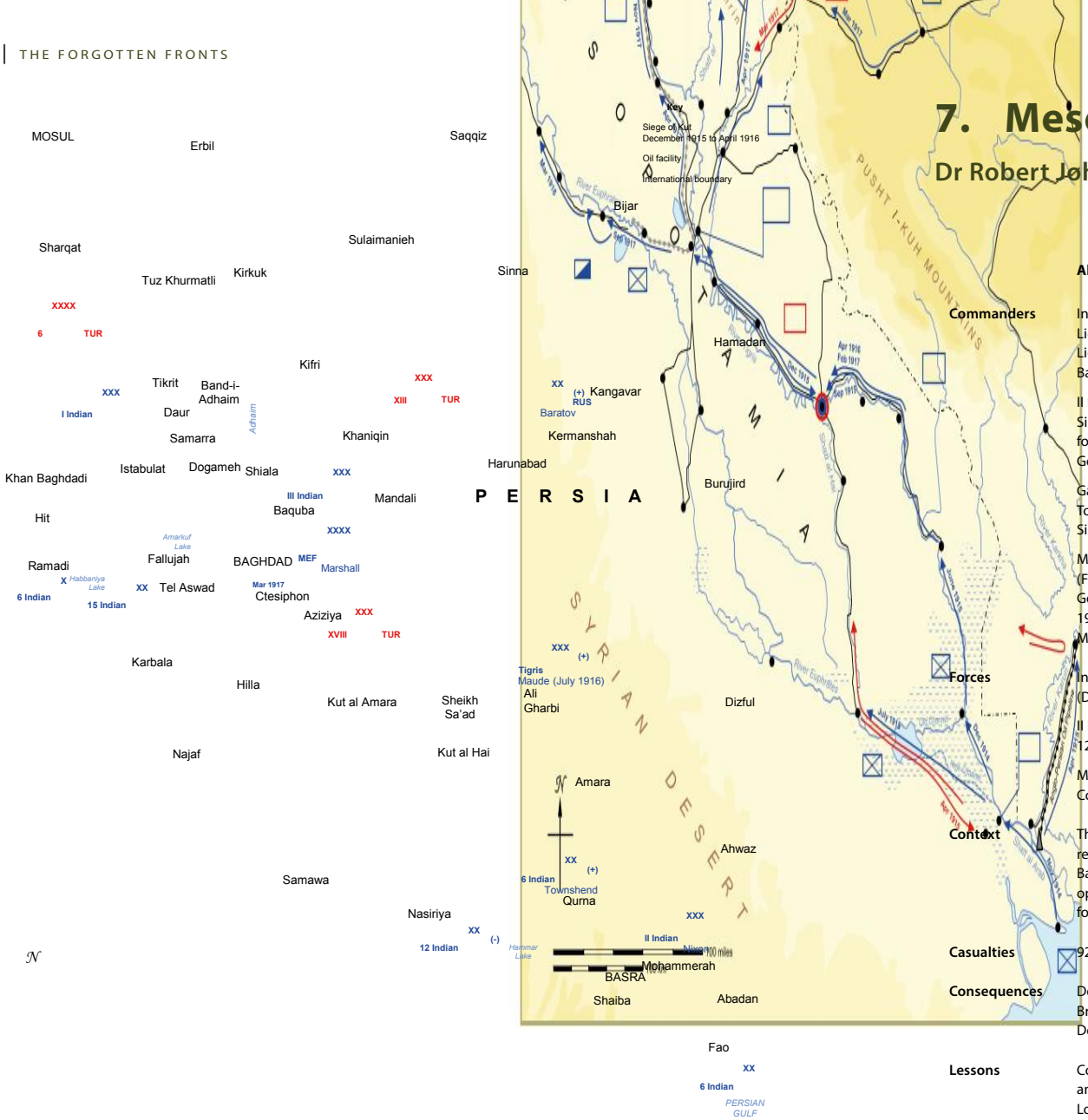
Wilks, John, and Eileen Wilks, *The British Army in Italy 1917 - 1918* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 1998).

Endnotes

1. For convenience, 'Austria' and 'Austrian' shall be used in lieu of Austria-Hungary and Austro-Hungarian respectively.
2. Comando Supremo can be used to mean either the Italian High Command or the Italian Supreme Commander.
3. Also known as the Twelfth Battle of the Izonso, or to the Austrians and Germans as the Battle of Karfreit.
4. Cadorna had been a martinet, with a disciplinary code encompassing summary executions and decimation which had resulted in the Italian Army's execution rate being significantly higher than that of the British or French Armies. Very few within the Italian Army would have regretted his departure.
5. As officially named by the Battles Nomenclature Committee, and with the Battle Honour 'Piave' awarded. The British Tactical Incident was named 'The Fighting on the Asiago Plateau', which took place more than 30 miles from the nearest point on the Piave River.
6. Major Shepard was the well known illustrator of Winnie The Pooh, and these drawings have shown by kind permission of the EH Shepard Trust and James Campbell.

7. Mesopotamia

Dr Robert Johnson



Map 7.1 Mesopotamia - 1915-1918

Mesopotamia Campaign

	Allied	Ottoman
Commanders	Indian Expeditionary Force D: Brigadier, later Lieutenant General, W.S. Delamain; succeeded by Lieutenant General (later Field Marshal) Sir Arthur Barratt (Nov 1914 - April 1915); II Indian Army (Mesopotamia) Corps: General Sir John Nixon (April 1915 - Feb 1916) with forward Headquarters under Lieutenant General G.F. Gorringe Garrison at Kut: Major General Sir Charles Townshend; Relief Force under Lieutenant General Sir F. J. Aylmer Mesopotamia Force: General Sir Percy Lake (Feb - Aug 1916); succeeded by Lieutenant General Sir Stanley Maude (Aug 1916 - Nov 1917); and replaced by General Sir William Marshal (1917-1918)	Ottoman Forces under Colonel Nureddin Bey (1914); General Colmar von der Goltz (1915-16); General Khalil Pasha (1916-1918)
Forces	Indian Expeditionary Force D: 6th Division (December 1914 II Indian (Mesopotamia) Corps: 6th Division, and 12th Indian Division (April 1915 Mesopotamia Force: Cavalry Division, I Indian Corps, III Indian Corps (March 1917	Ottoman Forces
Context	The aim of the Mesopotamia Campaign changed between 1914 and 1918: initially it was to secure the oil reserves at the head of the Gulf; subsequently it was to secure the approaches to Basra, then to capture Baghdad. The consistent objective was to destroy Ottoman resistance in the Tigris and Euphrates. The operations in Mesopotamia drew Ottoman forces away from Palestine and Anatolia, and, forced to fight on four fronts, thereby weakened the Ottoman Empire.	
Casualties	92,000 killed - British Empire	
Consequences	Defeat of Ottoman Army and destruction of Ottoman rule in Mesopotamia. British occupation of the region. Development of an independent Iraqi national consciousness.	
Lessons	Commanders should guard against reaching a culminating point in the strength of their forces and in logistics. Logistics and transport cannot be neglected: they can determine the outcome of operations. Methodical destruction of strong enemy positions requires overmatching fires. Manoeuvre can assist in unhinging even the strongest positions. Counterinsurgency many have to be conducted alongside conventional operations.	

Introduction

The First World War in the Middle East swept away 500 years of Ottoman domination, stirred nationalist sentiments and created enduring international borders. The campaign in Mesopotamia was significant in that process. The Allied victory there in 1918 marked the culmination of four years of gruelling effort. Fighting up the Tigris and Euphrates had cost the lives of 92,000 British and Empire personnel, and inflicted casualties of a similar size on the Turkish and Arab forces. It was conducted under the most testing of conditions, where the climate and local diseases were twice as likely to take a life as combat.[1] The campaign was memorable for its intense heat, extensive flooding, vast logistical challenges, and determined Ottoman resistance, all of which required those qualities which are the hallmarks of British service personnel: dogged endurance and dedication, and most memorable of all, moments of inspirational courage.

Overview of British Operations

The campaign fell into several distinct phases, with the two most significant landmark events being the Fall of Kut (April 1916) and the capture of Baghdad (1917). The campaign had begun as a mission to secure the strategic oil reserves in southern Persia and the head of the Gulf, but the threat posed by Ottoman forces drew the British and Indian formations deeper into the interior. A series of small, but significant tactical successes tempted the British and Indian Governments to push on up the Tigris to Baghdad. The failure of the first attempt to take the city led to a catastrophic withdrawal, a siege and then the capitulation of a British and Indian garrison at Kut al Amara, despite stoicism of the defenders and the incredible efforts of the relief force. The latter had been checked on several occasions, losing a staggering 23,000 men in the attempt to reach the beleaguered force. The defeat at Kut led to a period of reorganisation. Basra was still secure and the Ottomans could make no headway, such that their high command plunged their reserves into Persia and the Caucasus. Meanwhile, patiently building up their logistics, munitions, reinforcements and, crucially, their artillery, the 13th (Western) Division of the British Army and the III Indian 'Tigris Corps', some 150,000 troops, were ready to resume the offensive against the Ottomans.

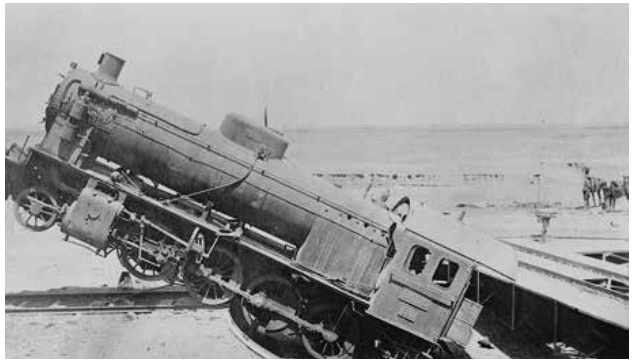
On the night of 13-14 December 1916, General Stanley Maude opened the assault with two corps advancing in parallel up both banks of the Tigris. Heavy rain impeded progress but it was Maude's primary concern to minimise casualties and proceed methodically from one objective to the next. After two months, Maude had secured the entire western bank below Kut including the main Ottoman strongpoints. On 17 February 1917, Maude transferred part of his force across the Shumran Bend and assaulted the right of the Ottoman line. Simultaneously, his corps attacked on the left. The Ottomans had no option but to fall back, fighting from prepared positions along the line of withdrawal. Massed Ottoman machine gun fire halted the attempts by British cavalry to outflank them. The British Army maintained its hot pursuit and it was noted that the Ottomans, when retreating, were constantly harassed by opportunist raiders, the so-called Marsh Arabs.

Maude's success, compared with the disaster of the early operations was due to several factors, including modernisation of staff work, intelligence collection and processing, and air operations. Reinforcements were trained in theatre, and there was a much stronger ratio of artillery than hitherto. Basra was redeveloped as a port, greatly increasing its capacity to handle large volumes of stores and munitions. A railway was constructed, and motor vehicles introduced to speed up the supply system. Depots were opened up along the route to the front, and a scientific approach was taken to logistics.

Maude resumed his offensive on 5 March 1917 and it took just three days to reach the Diyala River where the Ottomans had prepared new defences at the confluence with the Tigris. The initial British probing attacks were repulsed and Maude opted to outflank the river positions and threaten Baghdad directly. The British manoeuvre forced the Ottomans to readjust their line, leaving the defences in the hands of a single regiment. Maude's force then assaulted the weakened Diyala defences and overwhelmed them. The Ottomans were thus forced to withdraw, but they had not anticipated the suddenness of Maude's next move, which chased the Ottoman troops closely. The Ottomans were thrown into chaotic disorder and on the 11 March Maude was able to secure the city without resistance. Some 9,000 Ottoman troops were captured in the confusion, while local residents, anticipating great destruction, greeted the peaceful British occupation with relief.

Maude issued a Proclamation a week later, claiming that the British were not conquerors or occupiers but liberators. As military governor, Maude assumed responsibility for the entire Tigris plain. In London, it was decided that, after the war, Britain would govern the south as occupied territory and Baghdad would be placed in Arab hands. Eager to extend control across the Mesopotamian clans and tribes to prevent a costly breakdown of order, military detachments accompanied by political officers radiated across the region, demanding supplies and local manpower, mainly for logistical work. Only the Shi'ite holy shrine towns of Najaf and Karbala were exempted from the comprehensive policy of extraction and flag marches, largely for reasons of political and religious sensitivity. These settlements were indeed administered through local sheikhs, although they still came under British supervision. A new Directorate of Local Resources, and supply and transport officers organised the labour flows. Nevertheless, the process was something alien to many local tribes, who had little experience of centralised governance. It was likely there would be trouble ahead.[2]

7.1 Turkish prisoners passing through Piccadilly Circus New Street, Baghdad © IWM



7.2 Wrecked locomotive at Samarrah railway station © IWM

Maude's primary concern was, nevertheless, to prevent the remainder of the Ottomans in Mesopotamia joining with the 15,000 strong corps withdrawing from Persia. The solution was to seize the rail junction at Samarrah, some 130 km to the north. Marching out with 45,000 men, Maude planned four short attacks and his first objective was to prevent any attempt to flood the Euphrates plain and thus render British operations impossible; the secondary objective was to conduct operations to secure the western approaches to Baghdad. The first thrust was resisted strongly but the British drove the Ottomans back 35 km to the Adhaim River. Maude took Fallujah on 19 March 1917. Maude attacked again at Dogameh, and, despite severe losses, the two Ottoman forces were prised apart. The Ottomans consolidated on the Adhaim River, but the British drove them out of their positions on 18 April, relieving a cavalry contingent that had become pinned down at Shiala at the same time. Maude made a series of attacks along Ottoman defensive lines on 21 April, and some positions changed hands several times in close quarter fighting. Maude kept up the attacks and when the Ottomans realized their position could no longer be held, Maude's force secured Samarrah. The offensive had been a success. Nevertheless, the operations had cost 18,000 casualties and a considerable number succumbed to sickness. The toll necessitated another lull in the campaign, and once again there was pressure from London to scale down the operations in Mesopotamia, not least as the situation in the European theatre was changing for the worse.

Maude was now confronted by the classic strategic dilemma of reaching a culminating point. Although he had begun the offensive in December 1916 with an overwhelming numerical advantage, the steady attrition of casualties through combat and sickness, the need to despatch columns to carry out pacification around Baghdad, the requirement to garrison Baghdad and secure its western approaches, and the security needs of the long line of communications back to the coast had reduced the available forces to something approaching parity with the Ottomans. Worse, the Ottomans with their German partners were being reinforced and intended to take back Baghdad. Fortunately, the Ottomans had to first secure the Palestine front where the British and Empire forces had made significant gains. The diversion of these reinforcements gave Maude another chance to finish off the Ottoman Army in Mesopotamia for good.

In July 1917, an attempt to defeat the Turkish divisional garrison at Ramadi, 100 km west of Baghdad, had ended in failure. In September, another attempt was made with a British force under the command of General H.T. Brooking. In the first phase, Brooking constructed a bridge and road on the north bank of the Euphrates, hoping to persuade the Ottomans that the British intended an assault from this direction. In fact, Brooking sent the 6th Cavalry Brigade in a wide arc to the south, and they launched their attack in conjunction with the 15th Indian Division on 28 September from an unexpected direction. The combined effects of surprise, the envelopment and the rapid encirclement of the Ottomans by armoured car units, threw the defenders utterly off balance. An attempt to escape was cut off by the British cavalry and the remaining local Ottoman forces were forced to surrender the following morning.

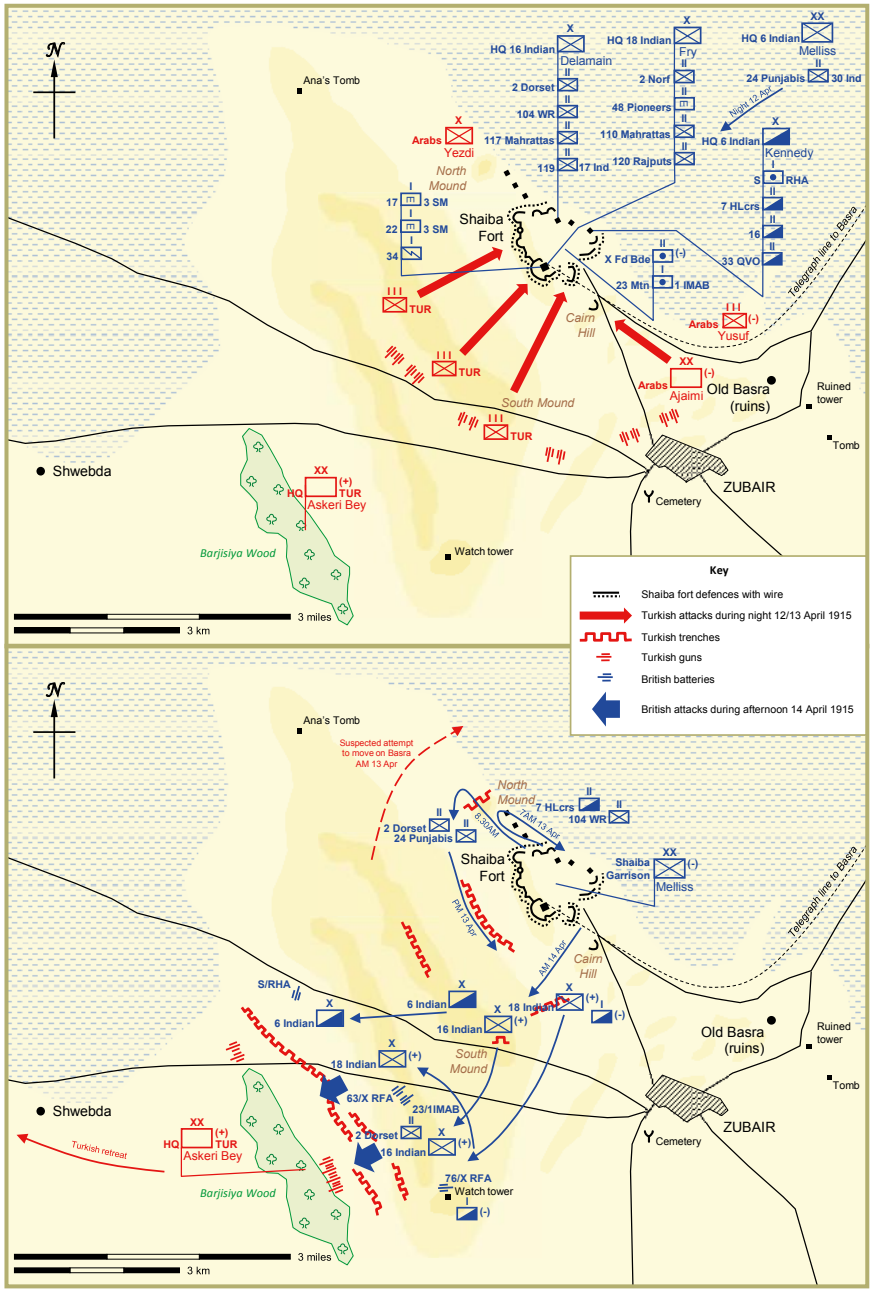
When operations were resumed in March 1918, the 15th Indian Division took Hit without resistance, as the Ottoman garrison gave way in its path. Brooking was determined to secure a decisive victory and he obtained 300 lorries to add mobility to his infantry for the next phase against Ramadi itself. He also ensured all the artillery had a surplus of horses, so that momentum could be maintained. Once combined with his 11th Cavalry Brigade and the armoured car squadrons of the 8th Light Motor Battery, Brooking could sweep around the Ottomans and establish cut off groups that could be dug in along the anticipated line of withdrawal. As expected, the Ottomans offered some resistance to the conventional assault and then started to withdraw from Ramadi. However, they soon came under fire from the blocking groups and all cohesion was lost. In a relatively short time, the entire Ottoman force had surrendered. The victory was so complete that, in following up, the mobile force overwhelmed the Ottoman supply base some 46 km in their rear, and captured its personnel, including the German advisors there.

7.3 Turkish prisoners captured at the Battle of Ramadi under escort © IWM

The final phase of the Mesopotamia campaign, commanded by Maude's successor Sir William Marshall, was the result of the British government's direction that Mosul, and its valuable oil resources, should be in British hands at the end of the war. This was to be a vital diplomatic advantage for London in any peace negotiations. As the British advanced, the British 11th Cavalry Brigade caught and pinned the Turks while the 17th Infantry Division came up in support. Through numerous delays,

Table 7.1 Summary of the Campaign

Dates	Phase	British Operations
Nov 1914	I	Landings at Fao; Basra secured; Repulse of Ottoman force
Apr - Nov 1915	II	Advance on Amara (Battle of Qurna), 'Miracle of Shaiba', 'Townshend's Regatta'; Battle of Kut; Repulse at Ctesiphon
Jan - Apr 1916	III	Siege of Kut; Relief attempts by Aylmer and the Tigris Corps: Battles of Sheikh, Wadi, Hanna, Dujaila Redoubt, Beit Asia & Sannaiyat. Fall of Kut.
Apr + 1916	IV	Reconstruction of Tigris Corps; Defensive posture on the Tigris
Jan - Mar 1917	V	Maude's 'siege warfare' at Khadairi Bend (Tigris) & Second Battle of Kut; Kut secured. Advance on Baghdad; outflanking at Tel Aswad; Baghdad secured Samarrah offensive: junction of Turkish forces prevented at Dogameh; Battle of Samarrah. Regrouping and reinforcement (Mar-Sep)
Sep 1917	VI	Encirclement of Turkish forces at Battle of Ramadi; Assault on Hit and Tikrit; Tikrit secured. Offensive operations halted by London.
Oct 1918	VII	Advance on Mosul to clear Mesopotamia



Map 7.2 Battle for Shaiba 1915

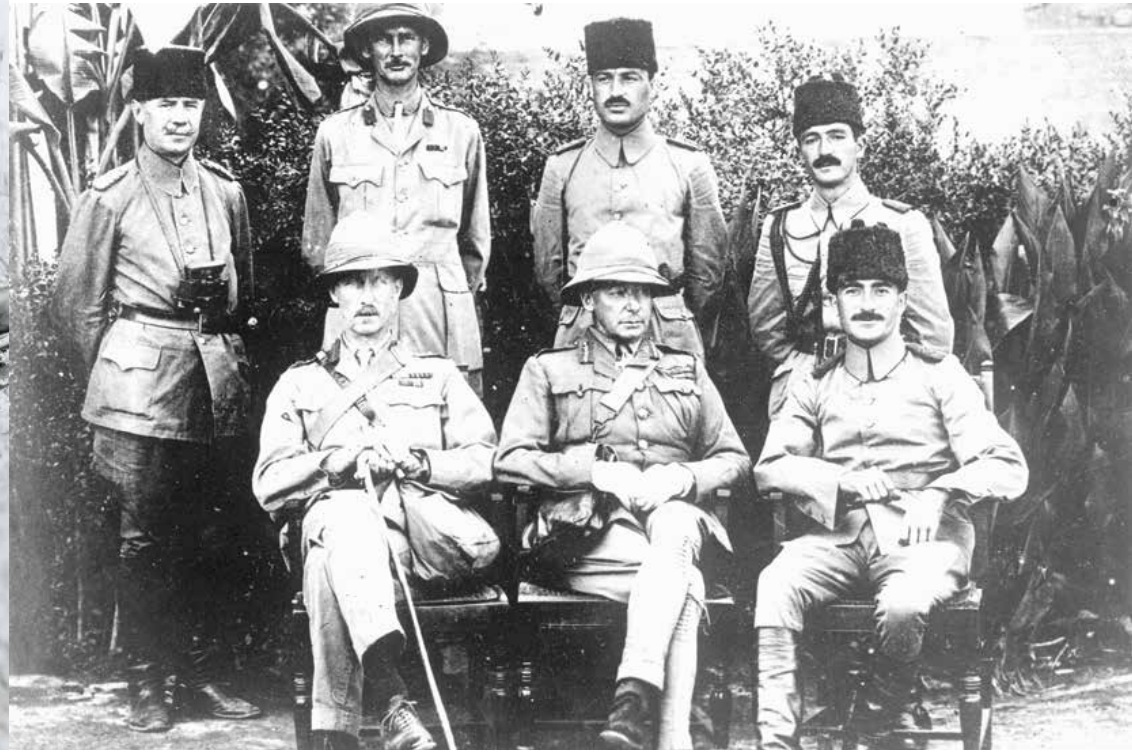
the British cavalry came under sustained shelling and took the decision not to wait any longer for their supports, but seize the initiative to mount their own assault on the high ground where the Turkish guns were positioned. Arriving on horseback, the 13th Hussars dismounted and assaulted a hill at Sharqat on which the Ottoman guns were deployed. They captured the entire position. The incident, when combined with news that negotiations to end the war were already underway, convinced the remaining Ottomans to surrender, and so, on the 30th October 1918, resistance came to an end. The British pressed on to Mosul, securing the city just after the announcement of the armistice.

Operational Learning in the Campaign
The Battle for Shaiba 1915

In 1914, the Government of India, which was given initial responsibility for this theatre, had no mechanism for long term planning, and, as far as the campaign in southern Mesopotamia was concerned, the piecemeal approach to deciding on objectives meant improvisation for every phase of operations. When Basra was taken, the Ottomans made a determined effort to take it with numerically superior forces. At Shaiba, where the advanced British entrenched encampment lay, the Ottomans attempted a dawn attack. At 0500 on 12th April 1915, a preliminary bombardment covered the approach and the Turkish-Arab infantry tried to locate and pass through the gaps in the British wire. Here they were repulsed by the sustained fire of the garrison. On the 14th, the Ottomans attempted to by-pass Shaiba in a wide arc. The British deployed a small mounted contingent to intercept them, but they were repulsed. General Melliss, in command at Shaiba, then made a second attempt using the 2nd Dorsets and 24th Punjabis, this time with fire support. The attack was a complete success. The Arab force, unfamiliar with the relentless assault of trained troops, was routed and 400 were taken prisoner. The remaining Arab formations refused to engage the British and the Ottomans had no choice but to pull back to their assembly area at Barjisiyeh. Here, the British again attacked in force on 14th April. Locating the Turks proved difficult and several adjustments had to be made to the dispositions during the action, which lasted all day. By late afternoon, the British attack had stalled, but, with ammunition running low and their water exhausted, the Dorsets made a bayonet charge. The Indian units, sensing the opportunity, also dashed forward and the Ottoman position was overrun, the remainder pulling back out of range. In defeating all Ottoman forces in southern Mesopotamia, the British had achieved a considerable victory in 'the Miracle of Shaiba', although at some cost, leading to optimism about the successes that might be achieved on this front. Perhaps more importantly the Arab populations had seen that the Turks could be defeated and ejected. Basra was effectively liberated, and there were revolts against Ottoman rule at Karbala and Najaf.

7.4 The Arch of Ctesiphon, a monument of the ancient world which marked the furthest point of Townshend's advance © IWM

7.5 Lance Naik (Lance Corporal) of the Indian 112th Infantry 34th Brigade (17th Division), during the Battle of Sharqat, Mesopotamia 28-30 October 1918 © IWM



7.6 General Charles Vere Ferrers Townshend with Khalil Pasha and staff shortly after the surrender of Kut
Front row: Colonel Parr, General Townshend, and Khalil Pasha
Back row: Naum Bay, Captain W E T Morland, Naum Hava, and Faud Bey © IWM

The Attack on Ctesiphon

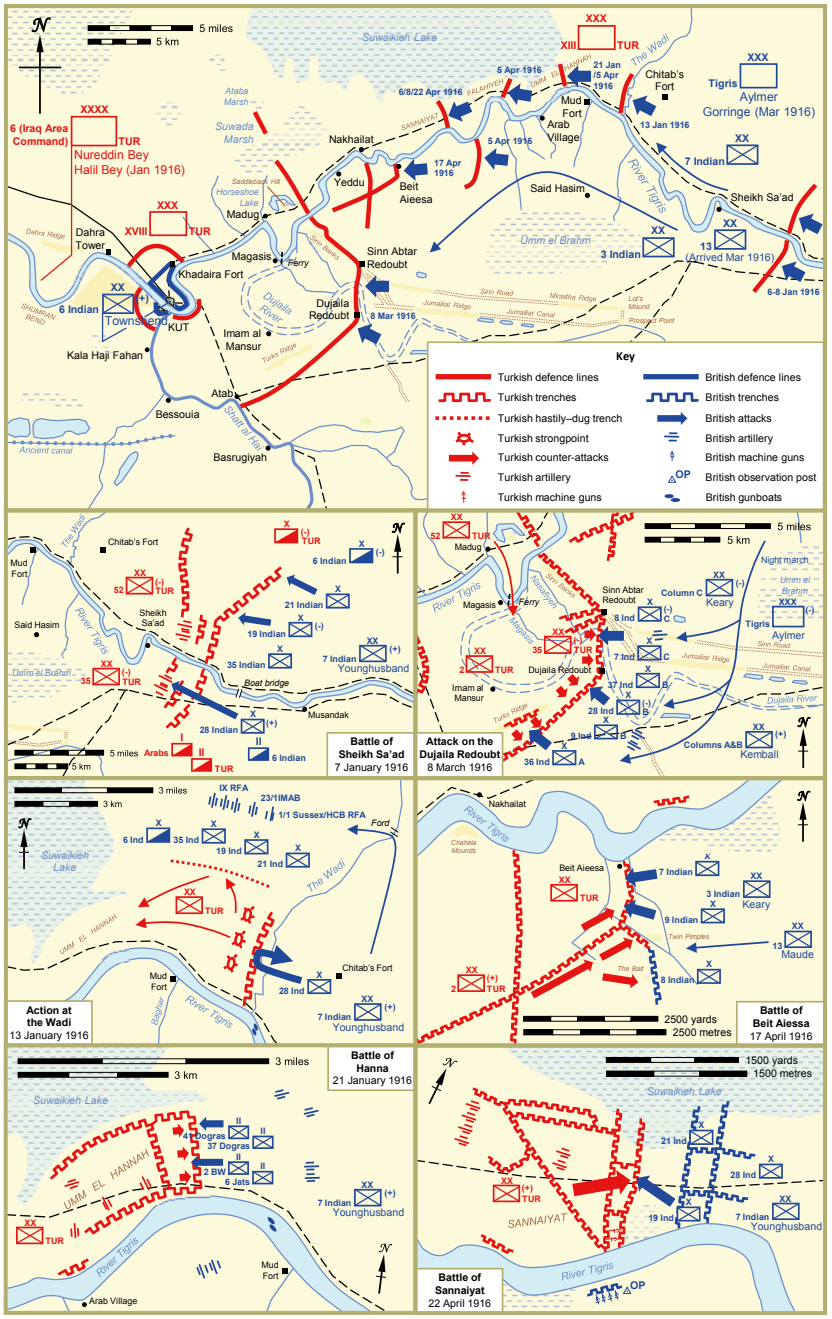
With his lightning advance up the Tigris, Townshend formed four columns to attack Ctesiphon, the last Ottoman defences before Baghdad. The Ottoman forces at Ctesiphon had spent 55 days digging in. Taking advantage of the flat terrain and the configuration of the Tigris, which formed a 6-mile loop, they were confident they could sweep the ground in front with fire. In subsequent bitter fighting, by the end of the first day the British had taken possession of the Turkish first line, but had been checked at every point thereafter. The following morning, Townshend renewed the attack, with an attempt to envelop the Ottoman flank. The attack was checked, but the Turkish counter-attack, using all their reserves, was also held in a series of tooth and nail, close quarter engagements. The Ottoman casualties were severe: some 6,188, a third of the force, and the 45th Division had taken losses of 65 per cent, leading to subsequent speculation that, had the British had more men, they may have been able to invest the city. Yet Townshend had taken losses of 4,600, some 40 per cent of his force, and he made the decision that, with only 8,000 effectives left, he was no longer strong enough to take Baghdad as ordered. Ctesiphon was a largely pyrrhic victory for Townsend that led to an inevitable withdrawal to a stronger position, in this case, Kut al Amara.[3] In doing so, however, he handed the initiative to the Ottoman forces. The defence of Kut, and the heroic relief efforts, were to be in vain. Both were defeated decisively.

The Battles to Relieve Kut

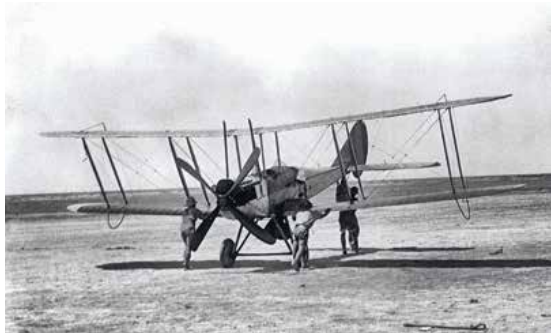
There were four phases in the operations to relieve Kut: the Battle of Sheikh Sa'ad; the action at the Wadi; the Battle of Hanna, and the final capitulation.

Phase 1 - The Battle of Sheikh Sa'ad

The Ottoman Army had the advantage of not having to manoeuvre beyond their series of trench lines, constructed between the river and the marshy terrain that lay to the north and east. The river was blocked with obstructions, and beyond the Ottoman trench systems there were other extensive areas of waterlogged ground. South of the river, there were more Ottoman trenches and redoubts. To prevent any wide envelopment to the north, further earthworks, posts and strongpoints had been built, and Ottoman cavalry were in strength to the far south. Uncertain as to the location of the Turkish positions, three brigades were sent forward to reconnoitre in force on 3 January 1916. Bad weather prevented the use of the handful of aircraft for reconnaissance and the going was made difficult by heavy rains that turned the landscape into a sea of mud and slush. Local Arabs gave some indication of the general location of the Ottoman defences, nevertheless, the flat topography and the Ottomans' ability to conceal their trenches meant that the only certain way of locating each system was, as one officer put it, 'to march on, 'til we bumped into them'. Despite breaking into and securing the Ottoman positions, logistical and transport difficulties forced the relief force to break off the engagement and regroup. An attempt to turn the position with a flank march was delayed by the ground, and the only option here was to dig in hastily just 300 yards from the Ottoman trenches. Nevertheless, 28th Brigade under Major General George Kemball enjoyed greater success south of the Tigris.



Map 7.3 The Battles to Relieve Kut



7.7 A BE2c of No 30 Squadron (RFC) is wheeled out ready to supply a dropping mission to the besieged garrison at Kut in late April 1916 © IWM

Having advanced under cover of the mist, and taken advantage of the temporary distraction afforded by the engagement on the Ottomans' other flank, the British and Indian troops seized several strongpoints. The 92nd Punjabis penetrated the main Turkish line, and was soon reinforced by the 1st Leicestershires and the 51st Sikhs.

The Ottoman forces began to fall back, which then enabled 28th Brigade to bring enfilade fire against the Turkish positions on the north bank. Overnight, the Ottomans withdrew, retreating to a new position seven miles upriver at the Wadi. The operations at Sheikh Sa'ad had achieved their objective although the power of modern weapons in defence was evident in the cost: some 1,962 were killed and a further 2,300 were wounded - more than a quarter of the attacking force.

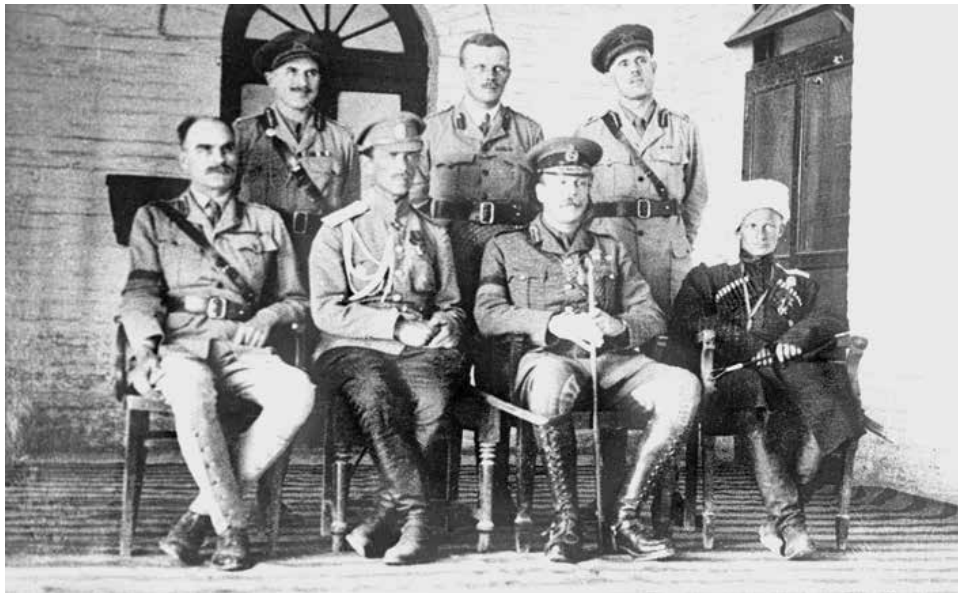
Phase 2 - The Action at the Wadi

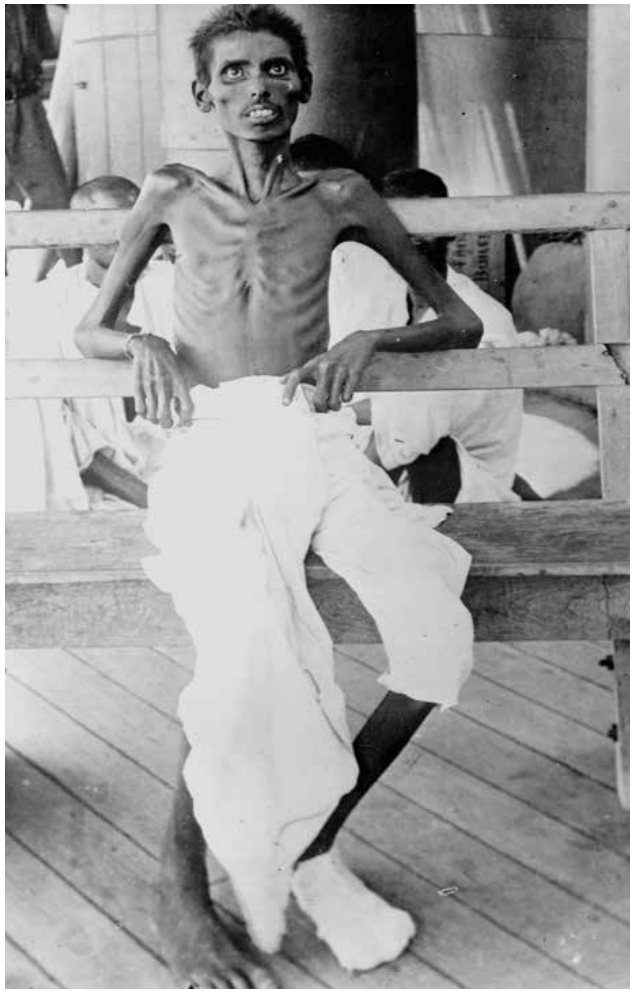
Bad weather then intervened to cause further disruption. Torrential rain turned the soft ground into a morass. Soon, infantrymen, artillery and horses were struggling to get through the glutinous mud. Moving a few hundred yards took hours and any hope of rapid manoeuvre or surprise was lost. With time running out for the Kut garrison, the relieving force opted to pit their determined men in a frontal attack. To support them, units were deployed to be able to give enfilade fire. A handful of gunboats on the river itself would add to the artillery bombardment set to precede the attack.

Phase 3 - The Battle at Hanna

The assault on the Hanna position began well. The fire was directed onto the Ottoman trenches and although a morning mist had caused delays, the infantry of the Black Watch and the Jats managed to cross the exposed open ground and seized part of the first trench line. The rest of the brigade was not so fortunate. Struggling across the mud, they were cut down. The Turkish counter-attacked and gradually recovered the lost trenches. The survivors of the attack drew back. Now the weather had deteriorated into a howling gale. The rain lashed down and the churned ground took on the consistency of a quagmire. The situation in the Ottoman defences was just as chaotic. A rising tide of floodwater and the torrential rain was filling the trenches, and the defenders were clinging to the melting walls amidst

7.8 Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Stanley Maude (GOC-in-C Mesopotamia August 1916 - 18 November 1917) with British staff officers and Russian officers from their army in Persia © IWM





7.9 This emaciated sepoy captured at Kut was photographed after he had been liberated during an exchange of prisoners. Two Thirds of the prisoners taken at Kut were Indian © IWM

the dead and wounded from the previous hours fighting. The British second wave attempted to wade forwards, but under the prevailing conditions, the attack was called off. Stiffened with cold, the survivors could only endure the freezing rains. The wounded who had not been able to get out of the killing zone largely died of exposure.

Phase 4 - Final Capitulation

When the weather improved, a final attempt was made to break through at Dujaila, but this was checked, and with it, the exhausted relieving force realized there was nothing more they could do for the men besieged at Kut.

Coordinated Military Order

General Stanley Maude, appointed to command the Tigris Corps in July 1916, had pressed for a return to the offensive against the Ottomans at Kut. He proceeded methodically, and systematically reduced the Ottoman defences with artillery, carefully co-ordinated infantry assaults and then thorough consolidation to break Ottoman counter-attacks. Meanwhile, General Charles Carmichael Monro assumed overall direction of the theatre, integrating it into the strategy of the Middle East and the rest of the war effort against the Central Powers, which offered the opportunity for truly co-ordinated action and comprehensive support. Monro, who had commanded the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force at Gallipoli, was served by an experienced staff and every detail was attended to.

Maude's and Monro's approach to operations reflected the changes that were taking place across the British army in the second half of the war. The Mesopotamia operations were similar to the fighting on the Western Front in Europe. The inadequate artillery bombardments of the Kut relief force in 1916 resulted in the same problems that were encountered on the Somme that year, but were rectified in both theatres by an exponential increase in the weight of fire that was brought down on enemy positions thereafter. Thick cloying mud was just as much an obstacle at the Hanna as it was at Ypres, leaving troops immobile and exposed to the high rates of fire of machine guns and field artillery. On 6 April 1916, for example, the 7th Meerut Division attacked in daylight on a narrow front hemmed in by marshes. They lost 1,200 men in twenty minutes. When in 1917 Maude set out to take Kut, his men dug saps and fought for each enemy trench systematically exactly as the Allies did in France and Flanders. Artillery, which now dominated the orchestration of operations, was timed to drop a curtain of fire just in front of the advancing infantry. In the later phases, manoeuvre was restored, just as in France. At Khan Baghdadi in March 1918, a mobile blocking force was deployed in the rear of the Turkish army by a fleet of motor lorries, armoured cars and a cavalry brigade: their success mirrored the achievements of similar motorised and cavalry forces in Europe that same year. In every respect, then, the fighting in this theatre was as modern as any other.

When analysing campaigns, it is always a temptation to focus on manoeuvre as the primary solution to successful operations

when, at times, simply being able to concentrate force and being able to resupply the right number of troops en masse was just as important to the outcome. Townshend had 12,000 men for his task: Maude and his successors could command 300,000 for theirs. The Mesopotamia Campaign also suggests that our concern with the new aspects of 'modern warfare' can obscure significant continuities. Morale, mass, appropriate tactics, and training were just as important as any new technology.

We might also acknowledge that the conditions under which the operations were conducted were particularly gruelling and as harsh as any of those that were experienced on the Western Front in Europe. Understanding the full array of factors which shaped the operations, including the myriad constraints, the power of the contemporary armaments when ranged in defence, and the determination of Ottoman resistance, gives us a better appreciation of the courage, endurance and achievements of the British army in this theatre.

Endnotes

1. Mark Harrison, The Fight Against Disease in the Mesopotamian Campaign', in Peter Liddle and Hugh Cecil (eds.), Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 1996), 475-89.
2. Memorandum from Arnold Wilson to the Chief of the General Staff, G.H.Q., 17 September 1918, L/P&S/10/619, India Office Library, London, UK.
3. Charles Townshend, My Campaign in Mesopotamia, (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1920); F.J., Moberly, The Campaign in Mesopotamia, 4 vols., (London: HMSO, 1924-27); Mesopotamia Despatches, Parliamentary Command Papers CD. 8074 EAST INDIA (MILITARY); WO 32/5204: Report on Siege of Kut-al-Amara by Lieutenant H McNeal, Royal Field Artillery, Dec 1915-Apr 1916. The National Archives.

THE SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT

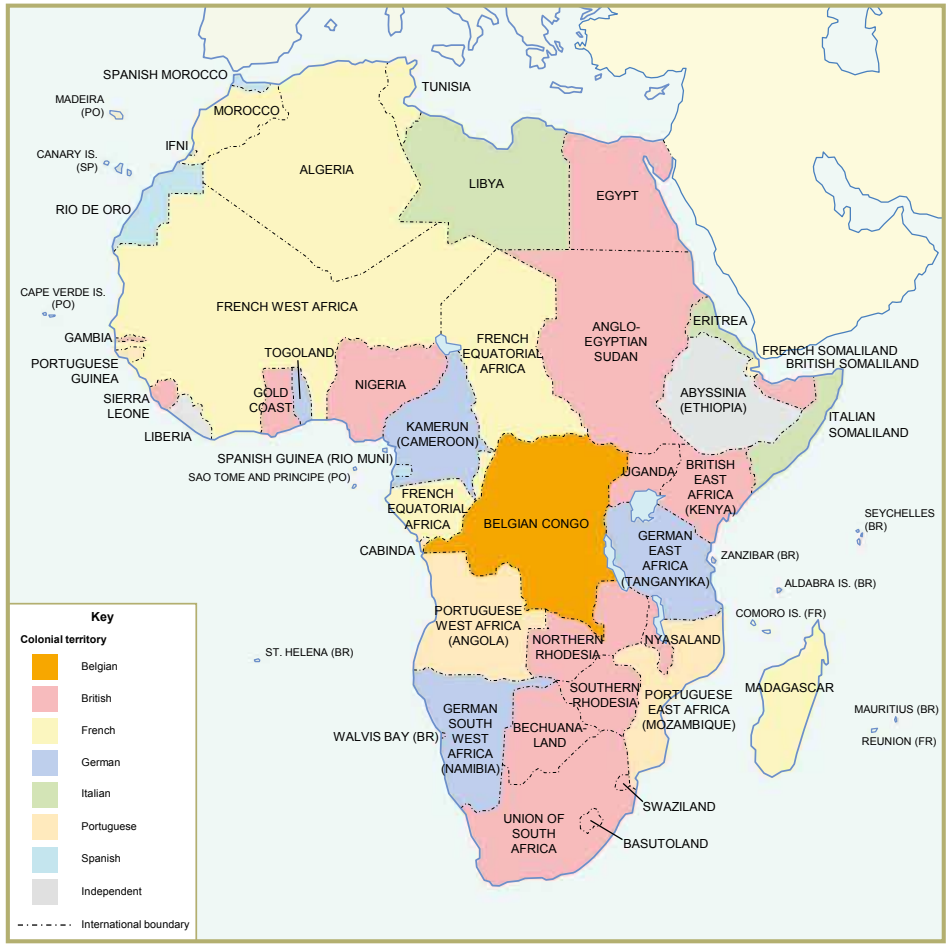
The Sykes-Picot Agreement was a secret wartime pact, designed in 1915-16, between the British and French governments to allocate defined spheres of influence across the Middle East once the Ottoman Empire had been defeated. The agreement was revealed when Russia collapsed in revolution and the new Bolshevik regime published it.

By its terms, France was to control southern Turkey, Syria, northern Levant and part of northern Iraq; Britain was to administer the vilayets (provinces) of Palestine, Jordan and Iraq; Russia would acquire Istanbul and Armenia. The exact boundaries were not determined and the agreement was a contingency document designed to co-ordinate war aims, but it was later regarded as a conspiratorial document and seen as evidence of betrayal by Arab nationalists. They argued that Britain and France were insincere about an independent national homeland for the Arabs. In fact the British were concerned from the outset that the French did not intend to permit any form of self-determination in Syria and Lebanon, where they would rule through selected intermediaries. This conflicted with the British assurance, offered by Sir Henry McMahon, to King Hussein, the Sharif of Mecca, that Damascus and part of Syria would come under Arab jurisdiction.

The British government envisaged a far greater degree of autonomy and sovereignty in their provinces, even to the extent of granting the Jews a homeland of their own within an autonomous region of Palestine. They saw no contradiction in this arrangement, as 'federation' plans had succeeded in Canada and South Africa where communal differences were stark. Sir Mark Sykes and Francois Georges-Picot had also assiduously set aside the entire interior of their demarcated zones for Arab autonomy, and they discussed this matter with Hussein in 1917. Nevertheless, when the war came to an end, there were other intervening factors. The United States had asserted more strongly the idea of national self-determination and Britain and France agreed in a Declaration, in November 1918, to the establishment of 'national governments and administrations'. They insisted that the declaration superseded the Sykes-Picot Agreement. In addition, the new League of Nations was to be the governing body that would supervise the occupied territories administered by Britain and France in the Middle East. The so-called Mandate territories nevertheless left ambiguity in the question of sovereignty, and suited no-one.

Arabs had tried to seize the initiative by establishing an independent state under the Pan-Syrian Congress in January 1920. The Allies responded with a conference at San Remo, which recognised a provisional authority in Syria and Mesopotamia, but France acted unilaterally against the Syrian independence movement and defeated the Arab forces at Maysalun in June 1920. By contrast, Britain acquired the approval of the League of Nations to govern in Palestine until such time as Arab and Jewish statehood was realisable. Arabs nevertheless continued to argue that the Sykes-Picot Agreement was a secret plan to subordinate their peoples under a form of colonial rule.

7.10 Turkish artillery shells bursting close to a Rolls-Royce armoured car of the 14th Light Armoured Motor Battery (14th LAMB) during the Battle of Sharqat, 28-30 October 1918 © IWM



Map 8.1 Africa

8. Britain at War in Africa

Bob Evans

Overview

British military operations in Africa during the First World War can be broadly divided between two phases which pivot around March 1916 when Cameroon surrendered and the conventional offensive to occupy German East Africa began. Before that date Britain conducted a series of joint and multi-national operations which successfully neutralised the German colonies in Togoland, Cameroon and South-West Africa without disproportionate losses or expense. These operations were carried out within the context of a clear and effective military strategy designed to deny overseas communication and supply facilities to the German Navy.

The remaining German colony in East Africa (present-day Burundi, Rwanda, and Tanzania) was energetically defended by the charismatic German commander General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck who repulsed a British amphibious attempt to take the port of Tanga with two Indian Army brigades in November 1914. This failure and the correlation of forces in East Africa meant that Britain had to decide either to assume a defensive posture and contain von Lettow-Vorbeck's forces; or it could substantially reinforce and invade the colony. SMS *Konigsberg*, the last German raider at large had been sunk by the Royal Navy in July 1915, so the military case for invasion for weak. Military considerations were subordinated to a mix of colonial politics and South African sub-imperial ambition which combined to swing the decision in favour of invasion.

Offensive operations began in March 1916 and this is the phase of the war in Africa that people are most familiar with. Unfortunately it reinforces the popular views of unimaginative British generals, conducting ponderous offensives and suffering heavy casualties. Whilst there is some truth to this there are also mitigating circumstances, unique to the East African campaign, which bring some explanation and balance to this perception. Equally it is important to consider the entire war in Africa without overly focusing on the Pyrrhic victory in East Africa at the expense of the earlier, more successful, period of operations.

8.1 The German light cruiser SMS *Konigsberg* on completion © US LoC

There is a tendency to dismiss these operations because of the small size of the forces engaged; but in fact the German forces defeated in Cameroon and South-West Africa were both larger than those initially available to von Lettow-Vorbeck.

When war broke out in 1914, Germany, Great Britain, France and Belgium all had significant territorial possessions in Africa. Germany had arrived on the continent late, and so its possessions were characterised by their arduous terrain, harsh environments and lack of development, relative to those of Britain and France. The fighting conditions experienced by troops during the war in Africa, especially East Africa, were arguably worse than in other theatres of the war.

The war in Africa was largely an imperial effort[1]. In total Britain, its African territories, India and the Union of South Africa employed around 400,000 soldiers in Africa (excluding Egypt) during the war. Of this number probably no more than 10% were a part of the British Army; the rest were raised locally by

8.2 Poster of Colonel (later General) Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck © US LoC

South Africa, the Government of India and the other local colonial governments. During the first phase of operations they also paid the majority of the costs. These numbers illustrate the achievement of an easily overlooked British strategic objective which required the overseas territories to both defend themselves and destroy the German capability to interfere with Imperial global communications, without significant forces from the United Kingdom.

More than other theatres the fighting in Africa also took place amongst the people, and in East Africa the collateral damage to the subsistence farming economies was significant, as was the loss of life amongst the huge numbers of African civilians who were employed as military labour. Military operations would have been impossible without this African labour force. Imperial troop deaths from all causes during the war in Africa amounted to about 15,000, or 4% of the forces deployed. Although reliable statistics are difficult to come by, a conservative estimate is that 650,000 Africans were employed in the military labour force. Around 60,000 or 9% of them died. This means that the non-combatants employed in the military labour force died at over twice the rate of the combatants.

Strategic Context

At the outbreak of war the Offensive Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence was formed to implement a global strategy and bring some limited coordination to military operations outside of Europe. Although it ceased to exist in November 1914 the committee's broad strategic intentions were pursued until the end of 1915. Britain's overarching strategic objective was the concentration of maximum imperial forces in the main theatre of war. This could only be done if Britain had total control of the seas and the imperial administrations were expected to play a key role in securing them.

The cornerstone of this strategy was that all imperial possessions were to be responsible for their own defence so any regular garrison units could be redeployed and concentrated in Europe. In addition any German ability to interfere with Britain's command of the seas was to be removed. This meant that early in the war the colonial administrations were also invited, where feasible, to occupy German ports to deny the German Navy refuelling and resupply facilities and also to capture Germany's global wireless network. Occupation of German territory other than to further this strategic objective was deemed unnecessary. Instructions were sent out from the Offensive Sub-Committee (via the Colonial Office) during August to this effect.

Britain's possessions in Africa were an eclectic mix of administrations all of which had subtly different constitutional and administrative arrangements. Most were colonies and protectorates although Rhodesia was administered by the British South Africa Company[2]. The largest territory was the Union of South Africa which was unique amongst the self-governing dominions in that it abutted German territory and its people and leadership were mostly of Dutch, rather than British extraction. In 1914 it was not at all certain if South Africa would support the imperial effort against Germany as there were still many Boers who saw the conflict as an opportunity to rekindle their nationalist agenda which had been suppressed in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. Many of the Union's key leaders in 1914 had been Boer leaders during that war. Imperial contingency plans existed to garrison South Africa in the event of it taking a neutral or hostile stance.

None of these administrative differences are relevant to this military study other than to note two key points. First, their local forces were paid for and initially under the jurisdiction of their respective governments. Second, all issues relating to the colonial administrations were overseen by the Colonial Office. This meant that in the early stages of the war all orders for action were issued by the Colonial Office, not the War Office.

Historically the Indian Government had provided the forces for imperial military activity on the edges of the Indian Ocean and this included East Africa. Loosely controlled by the British Government, the India Office in London once again looked to the Indian Government and its army to supply troops for operations in East Africa in 1914.

Also worthy of note is that when war broke out many of the colonial soldiers and administrators in Africa from both sides were at home on leave. Britain could get hers back; Germany could not.

8.3 Gold Coast Coat of Arms © Wiki Common

British Colonial Forces

Alongside the troops raised by South Africa, Britain had two main organisations available to it in Africa on the outbreak of war: the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) and the King's African Rifles (KAR) in the East.

Both were composite, loose groupings rather than formalised, structured formations. The WAFF comprised a number of units responsible for the defence and internal security of Sierra Leone, Gambia, The Gold Coast (modern Ghana) and Nigeria. It was commanded by a British Army major-general.

Table 8.1 The West African Frontier Force in 1914

Unit	Officers	NCOs	African Troops
Nigeria Regiment	175	101	4966
Gold Coast Regiment	39	11	1433
Sierra-Leone Battalion	28	1	644
Gambia Company	2	2	128

The KAR was deployed across all of Britain's East African possessions. It was organised into three battalions but it rarely deployed in anything other than company strength. In 1914 its twenty one companies were widely dispersed over a vast expanse of territory.

The main purpose of the WAFF and KAR was to provide the civil power with an internal security capability and their structure, equipment scales and training was optimised for this role, not a conventional military one. Like their German counter-parts they lacked the staff organisation and supporting services available to regular army formations.

Both units grew substantially during the war with the WAFF supplying 24,000 troops. The KAR saw an even greater expansion over this period and it eventually became the largest force element in East Africa.

Table 8.2 KAR Growth

Date	Officers	NCOs	African Troops
4 Aug 1914	62	2	2319
1 July 1918	1193	1497	30658

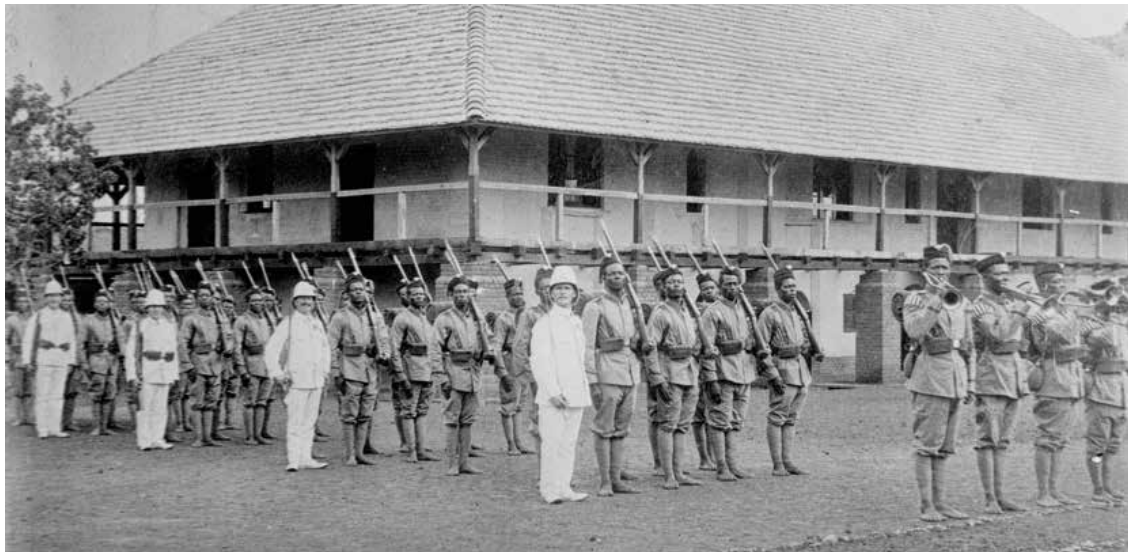
German Forces

The German colonies in Africa were not bound into any wider global strategy because Germany did not really have one. Germany's colonies were cut off from the homeland and geographically separated from each other. They could therefore only act in isolation and would receive no regular reinforcement or re-supply during the war. The colonial forces were therefore unable to conduct offensive operations at anything other than the tactical level. The objective was to survive in the field for as long as possible.

German troop numbers engaged in Africa during the war totalled no more than 40,000. Like Britain's, Germany's standing forces in Africa were structured and scaled primarily for internal security duties in support of the colonial civil administrations. However German tactical units had a higher proportion of regular German officers and NCOs to Africans than the equivalent British units. Also many of the European settlers mobilised on the outbreak of war were reservists who would have previously undertaken compulsory national service in the German military.

Tactically the majority of these forces were organised into field companies which could vary in size from 100-200 men

8.4 Colonial troops, German Government station, Ebolowa, Kamerun 1916 © US LoC



depending on the local circumstances. These companies were formed from African askaris led by German officers and NCOs. Where there were sufficient mobilised settlers, European-only, schutzen[3] companies were also formed. The longer the fighting lasted the greater the degrees of improvisation needed to keep these forces in the field. By the end of 1915 in East Africa the exigencies of the situation meant that the distinction between field and schutzen companies had been abandoned. In East Africa the Germans also made good use of tribal irregular warriors, Ruga Ruga, particularly as scouts for the field companies.

In South West Africa, which had a larger settler population than the other colonies, the legacy of a bitter war with the indigenous population was still very raw and no Africans were armed or employed by the Germans.

Military Operations to March 1916

Togoland

Togoland (now modern Togo, less some territory which went to Ghana) was roughly the same size as Ireland and was surrounded by British and French territory. The rudimentary port facilities at Lome were targeted by the British but the most important objective was the high -power transmitter located at Kamina 110 miles from the coast. This transmitter which had only just been completed when war broke out was the linchpin of the German global communications network, as it linked directly with Berlin and to the other German colonies to the south and east. It could also communicate with German ships in the Atlantic. Togoland was defended by no more than 1,500 paramilitary troops consisting of about 300 mobilised European settlers and 1,200 native armed police.

Whilst the Offensive Sub-Committee[4] planned its West African operations the British commander of the Gold Coast Regiment demanded the German surrender. This caused the German governor to send a wireless message to Berlin on 7th August 1914 stating that he was abandoning Lome and withdrawing inland to Kamina. The message was intercepted by the British who rapidly marched two companies of infantry into Lome which was occupied on 9th August. The British battalion-sized force consolidated its position at Lome and on the 12th August an African soldier Regimental Sergeant Major Alhaji Grunshi[5] of the West African Frontier Force, fired the first British rifle shot of the war whilst reconnoitring the route north towards Kamina.

Reinforced by a company of French colonial troops the small force advanced north towards Kamina without resistance until the 22nd August, when they encountered an entrenched enemy force astride the road at the village of Khra. A sharp indecisive action followed and the Germans withdrew under cover of night. However the battle broke the German will to fight and on the 24th August they destroyed the wireless installation and surrendered on the 25th.

The swift campaign was characterised by local initiative and speed of movement. The Germans had been expected to offer stiffer resistance, but with Allied forces converging on them from all sides, and with little direction from Berlin, resistance quickly collapsed. The wireless station at Kamina was Germany's most valuable strategic asset in Africa; it was also the most poorly defended and the German forces lacked strong military leadership. It fell within two weeks.

The Cameroons

Cameroon was one and half times the size of Germany and was surrounded by British, French and Belgian territory[6]. The Anglo-German boundary with Nigeria ran for over 1,000 miles.

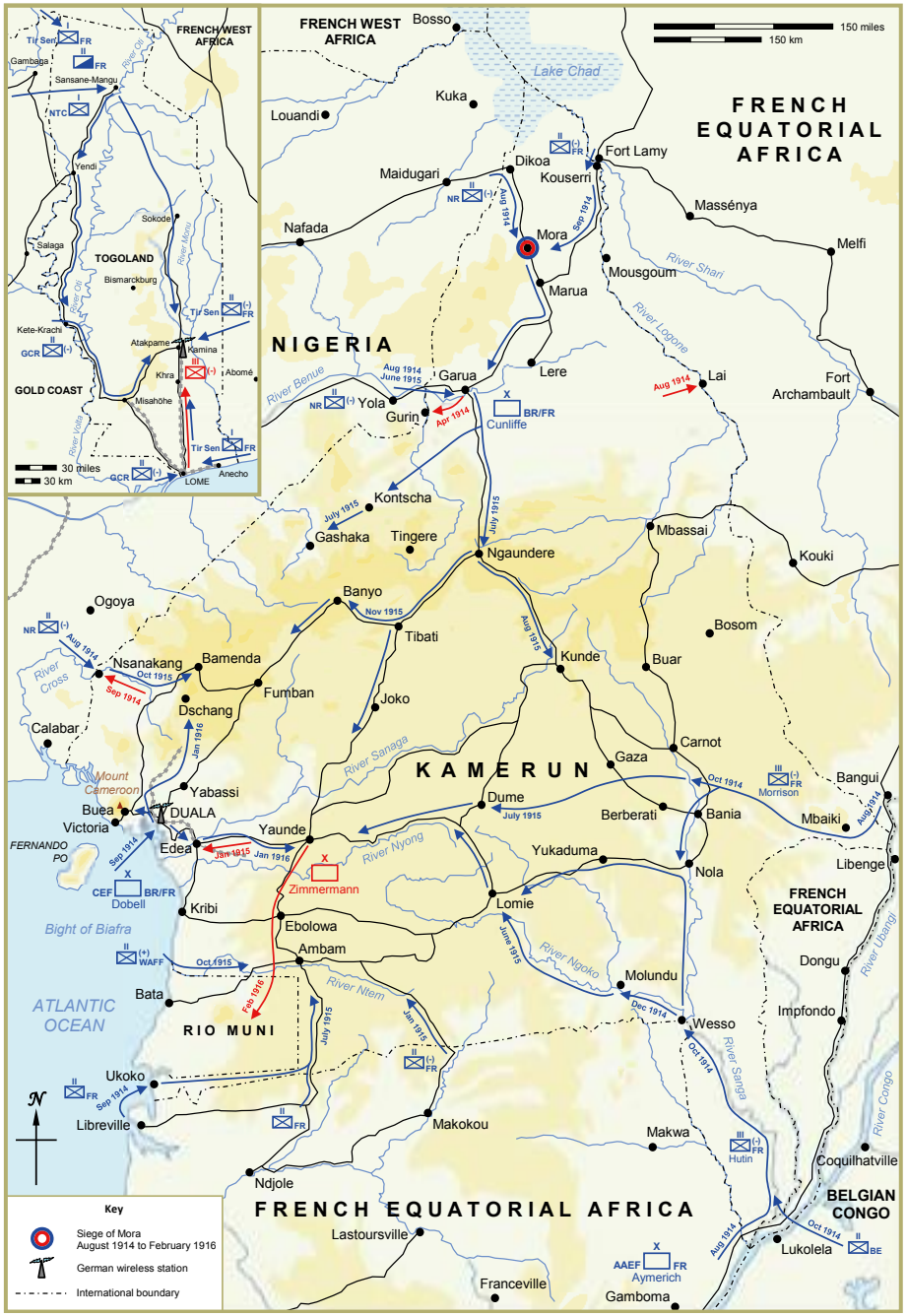
The Germans planned to rest their defence of Cameroon on the northern plateau, which they had secured with some formidable prepared positions at Mora and Garua. Their intention was to cede the coastline and hold out as long as possible. They had a force of about 1,500 Germans and 6,500 native regular troops available to them, but they were equipped with poor weapons and lacked significant ammunition stocks. The main objectives for British operations were the port and wireless station at Duala, as well as the facilities at Bea and Victoria. Allied intelligence was poor and it completely failed to understand the orientation of the German defence or its objective.

The initial British assessment was that the forces on scene would require reinforcement before offensive operations could begin. Consequently an Anglo-French force totalling 4,300 troops was assembled and began operations at the end of September. The British element was based upon WAFF units, supplemented by a regular battalion from the West African Regiment and numbered 2,400 men. These land forces were well supported by a composite naval force comprised of small Royal Navy, French Navy and Nigerian Marine vessels. The main operations involved riverine manoeuvring which secured Duala by 27 September having met no German resistance.

At the start of 1915 Allied moves from multiple directions towards the German main defence zone stalled because of German resistance and the difficulty in maintaining effective supply lines. These grew as the columns moved further away from their bases into German territory and caused the fighting strength to be dissipated by disease.

Since the beginning of the war columns of British troops that had moved overland from Nigeria had been besieging the German fortifications at Mora and Garua. In June 1915 the forces at Garua were augmented by a French 95mm gun which proved decisive and the position was captured on 10 June. This unhinged the wider German defence and made their northern plateau positions untenable.

8.5 2.95" gun in action, German Cameroons © IWM



Map 8.2 Kamerun and Togoland

The Germans attempted to re-orientate their defence around the town of Juande but the position was hopeless as they were critically short of ammunition and faced with an Allied force of 11,500 that was converging on them from multiple directions. In February 1916, under pressure from the Allies the remaining German force of 500 Europeans and 6,000 Africans retreated south-west into the Spanish territory of Muni, where it remained interned for the rest of the war. The subsequent surrender of Mora on the 18 February effectively ended the campaign.

German South-West Africa

German South-West Africa (modern Namibia) is about two and a half times the size of the UK and was the oldest and most developed of the German colonies. A high proportion of its settlers were military reservists and it raised a force of about 5,000 European troops. No African troops were raised because of the hostility of the local population towards the Germans, and throughout the campaign German forces continued to be diverted to internal security duties. German defences gravitated around the railway that ran from north to south down the middle of the country. As well as the developed wireless network with its main facility at Windhoek, the British also targeted the naval facilities at Luderitz.

To Britain's relief South Africa swung behind the Imperial war effort when war broke out and this released two brigades worth of regular troops for the Western Front. South Africa raised a force of about 5,000 troops which were divided into three separate groups. One was landed by the Royal Navy at Luderitz whilst the other two moved North across the Orange River into the desolate border region. The land forces were poorly prepared logistically and the westerly force of 1,800 men was destroyed by the Germans at Sandfontein at the end of September 1914.

8.7 General The Right Honourable Jan Christian Smuts, PC, KC - Francis Dodd © IWM

Shortly after this a revolt of about 10,000 Boers broke out in South Africa and the campaign against the Germans was paused until it could be put down, which was successfully achieved at the end of January 1915 by a government force of about 30,000. Operations against the Germans resumed and the South African

8.6 The Natal Mounted Rifles in German South West Africa © IWM

Map 8.3 German South West Africa

force was expanded to around 40,000 comprising equal numbers of Dutch speaking mounted troops and English speaking infantry; they were commanded by the Boer politician-generals, Botha and Smuts. Botha led a force which was landed at Walvis Bay; Smuts led a force which attacked across the Orange River. Operations against the Germans resumed in December 1914 this time with much better logistical provision. By the end of April 1915 the Germans had been forced from the south of the country.

In the north Botha's forces were initially unable to sustain a drive to Windhoek because of supply problems across what was a desolate wasteland. In a calculated gamble, by throwing forward his mounted infantry he captured the key railway junction at Karibib on 3 May 1915; Windhoek followed on 13 May. The Germans retreated north but remained logistically fixed to the railway line whereas Botha made good use of his burgher mounted infantry to compromise German defensive positions and force withdrawal. In a hopeless position the remaining 3,400 Germans surrendered in the vicinity of Otavi on the 9th July without having fought any major engagement.

German East Africa - From the Outbreak of War to March 1916

German East Africa (modern Burundi, Rwanda & Tanzania), at roughly twice the size of Germany, was her largest overseas possession. It was surrounded by four British territories (British East Africa, Uganda, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland), Belgian Congo and Portuguese East Africa (Portugal joined the allies in March 1916). Zanzibar and Pemba, the islands immediately off its coast were controlled by Britain, and well placed to support naval forces blockading the main German ports of Tanga and Dar es Salaam. It was the only overseas territory where the fighting between Britain and Germany lasted for the entire course of the war.

The two largest towns were Tabora and Dar es Salaam which were linked by railway. The majority of the settler population lived in the vicinity of Mount Kilimanjaro (in modern Tanzania) because the environment there was relatively benign. This area was linked by railway to the port of Tanga. The colony's main lines of communication, as well as its rivers, ran east-west across the country. This is an important point to note as the British offensives ran against this grain coming from the north and south.

The terrain varied greatly from well-watered areas and desert steppes to waterless impenetrable bush. The rainy seasons, which took place at different times across the country, turned the inhospitable terrain into impassable quagmires. Malaria, tetse fly and a range of other tropical diseases meant that the country was a very malign environment for men and animals. Arguably the environment was the worst experienced by any troops during the war and its effects dominate all of the primary accounts.

At the start of the war the Germans had about 3,000 troops formed into field companies. This rose as settlers were mobilised and more native troops were raised. By mid-1915, when they were augmented by the crew of the SMS *Konigsberg*, the force comprised about 3,300 Germans and 15,000 African askaris. For the majority of the war these forces had the significant advantage of being able to move on interior lines within an established logistics network. Commanded by von Lettow-Vorbeck, who was an experienced colonial soldier, they proved to be a formidable adversary. The Germans had to defend a vast country and so their troops were dispersed at key points around the colony. The largest force was concentrated in the north under von Lettow-Vorbeck but probably never exceeded 8,000 troops.

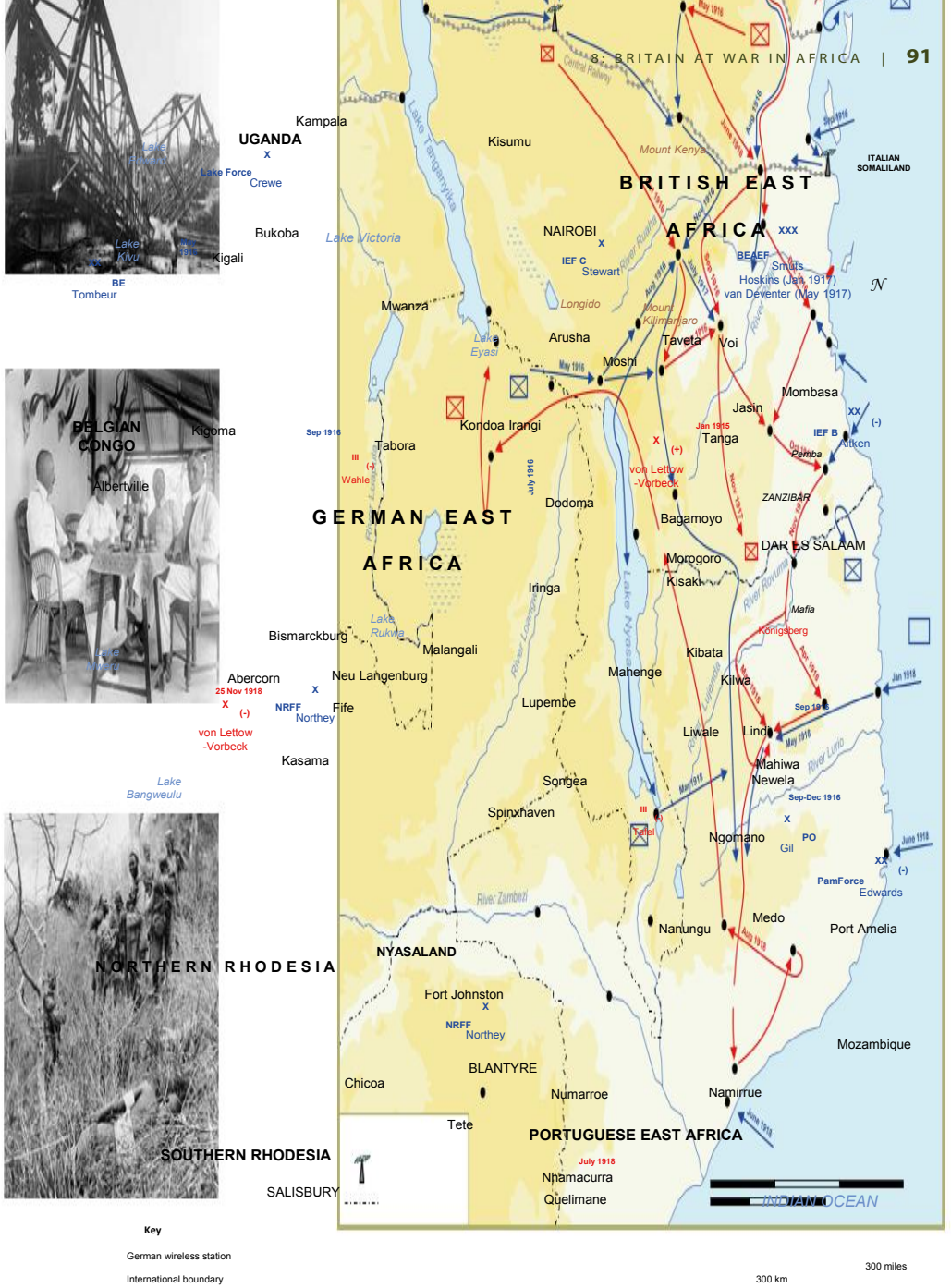
In contrast with the situation in the other territories the available 4,300 troops of the KAR were insufficient for any serious offensive action to be considered. The initial plans for East Africa were therefore defensive and involved defeating

8.8 German ship *Koenig* sunk by the Germans to block the harbour at Dar es Salaam © IWM

8.9 Bridge on the Morogoro-Tabora (Central) Railway, German East Africa, destroyed by Germans, 1916 © IWM

8.10 General Count Lettow von Vorbeck, German commander-in-Chief in East Africa, with colleagues on the veranda, 1914 © IWM

8.11 Men of the 4th Battalion, King's African Rifles watch over a wounded German askari soldier after a patrol fight in the bush © IWM



Map 8.4 German East Africa

German moves to interrupt the vital Mombassa-Uganda railway. Although they captured Taveta, further German advances were stopped by tenacious British defences which by the end of September had been reinforced with a brigade of Indian troops (Indian Expeditionary Force C (IEF-C)) supplied by the Government of India. Von Lettow quickly appreciated that the cost of these operations in lives and materiel was unsustainable and there was an impasse until November 1915, with the main German force concentrated at Moshi.

Meanwhile, in conjunction with the Colonial Office, the Indian Government had been preparing another two-brigade force (Indian Expeditionary Force B) for an amphibious occupation of Tanga. This attack was scheduled for early November and took place in conjunction with an overland attack by IEF-C.

From the British perspective just about everything that could go wrong did go wrong at Tanga. IEF-B was poorly led, planning was poor, the troops were of indifferent quality and they were poorly equipped. They left Bombay on the 16 October 1914 and were kept on board ship until they arrived off Tanga on 2 November, by which time the existing deficiencies were exacerbated by the poor condition of the troops. Any surprise was squandered when the British spent 24 hours unloading some of the forces onto badly chosen landing sites. The tiny German forces were reinforced using the railway. Having failed to take the town whilst it was essentially unoccupied, IEF B had no success against increasingly determined German resistance, now led by von Lettow with about 1,000 men. Further British attacks failed ignominiously and on 5 November the shattered British troops were re-embarked and sailed to Mombassa. IEF-C in the north fared no better and it made no significant gains.

The attack and subsequent British defeat at Tanga was a defining moment of the campaign. For the British it meant that there could be no quick conquest of the German colony. British pride and prestige were also badly dented. It also led to the War Office assuming overall control of operations in East Africa. For the Germans it bolstered their will to resist, raised the morale of their askaris and provided them with an unexpected windfall of arms and ammunition abandoned by the British.

The British forces in East Africa now numbered about 15,000 but they were demoralised and decimated by disease. Throughout 1915 the British commander estimated that less than half of his force was fit to fight, with the infantry being particularly hard hit. With the exception of some action on Lake Tanganyika and the sinking of SMS *Konigsberg*, 1915 saw little change to the military situation. Although in the background considerable changes to strategy and forces were taking place.

Overview of the Situation by March 1916

By this date all of Britain's original objectives relating to Africa had been met. The facilities in Togo, Cameroon and South-West Africa had been eliminated and their German garrisons defeated or driven from the country; British casualties had been low. All of this had been achieved with mostly local forces although by the end of 1915 the War Office controlled military operations in the continent. Despite the failed operations against German East Africa, the sinking of SMS *Konigsberg* by the Royal Navy in June 1915 removed the final naval asset that could have been used to interrupt the sea lines of communication. With hindsight then, the decision to launch an offensive into German East Africa could be viewed as militarily unnecessary. Certainly at the time Lord Kitchener at least believed this, and he was vocal in his opposition to the decision to expand operations.

The details of why the decision was taken to invade German East Africa go beyond the scope of this essay but were a combination of local colonial politics, bruised Imperial pride and South African sub-Imperial ambition. Following the success in South-West Africa, a South African election had heavily endorsed Botha's support of Britain's war effort. Consequently South Africa raised an expeditionary force commanded by Lieutenant General Smuts, which it deployed to East Africa to defeat von Lettow.

This predominantly South African force consisted of four infantry brigades and two mounted infantry brigades. They were organised into three divisions of two brigades each. The two South African Divisions comprised one infantry brigade and one mounted infantry brigade. The third division of two infantry brigades was formed from the remnants of IEFs B&C, supplemented with locally raised units. The total strength was 27,350 men with 71 guns and 123 machine guns.

East Africa 1916-1918

Operations began in March, when two British columns launched themselves into German East Africa either side of Mount Kilimanjaro. Taveta was recaptured and Moschi occupied by mid-March. Von Lettow traded ground for time. Smuts attempted to manoeuvre in the way that Botha had done in South West Africa, but the terrain obstructed his enveloping moves and made it difficult to fix von Lettow in position. These flanking manoeuvres carried out in appallingly difficult terrain exhausted the troops and strained supply lines. The Germans, aided by the density of the bush, generally withdrew before they could be substantially engaged. They were also adept at exploiting any British mistakes or over-extensions delivering some stinging counter-attacks when the opportunity presented itself. The official historian sums the offensive up well:

> ***"To the characteristic South African strategy of envelopment , steadily maintained despite a succession of disappointments, the German commander opposed a technique of continued skilful retreat , profiting by all his advantages of interior lines, homogeneous troops, mobility and familiarity with the country , and rightly taking no risks which might compromise the continued existence of his forces. The campaign of 1916, in short, became one long rear-guard action."***[7]

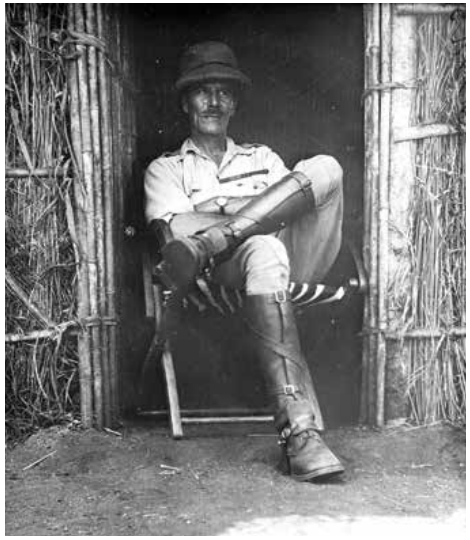
By the start of September Dar es Salam, Tabora (which was occupied by a Belgian force from Belgian Congo) and the central railway were all under British control. A brigade sized force attacked out of Rhodesia and by the end of 1916 all of von Lettow's supply bases, apart from Mahenge, had been captured and the bulk of the German forces had been driven south of the Rufiji River. The British units were exhausted and hollowed out

8.12 German East Africa. Wounded ready to be moved from Nyangao, after the Battle of Mahiwa; October 15th-19th 1917. Nigerian Brigade © IWM

by disease. The Germans were by no means beaten and they besieged an overextended British WAFF force (recently arrived from Cameroon) at Kibata for two months during the winter. The onset of rains combined with the exhausted, disease ravaged state of the British forces prevented any further major mobile operations until the spring of 1917.

This hiatus in the fighting saw Smuts and the bulk of the South African forces leave East Africa. They were replaced by units of the KAR and WAFF who, Smuts acknowledged, were excellent

8.13 German East African Campaign. Brigadier General F.H. Cunliffe, C. B., commanding the Nigerian Brigade © IWM



infantry and better suited to the climate than non-African troops[8]. These forces were organised into two roughly divisional sized commands and three brigade size forces. In all they amounted to thirty-one infantry battalions of which four were Indian units, seven were South African, one was British and the remaining nineteen were all native units, mostly KAR and WAFF. By mid-1918 this force had altered again so that nineteen of the twenty seven infantry battalions were KAR. The remainder were mostly African.

Offensive operations began in earnest again in July 1917 as the British attempted to trap the Germans in the south and prevent their escape into Portuguese territory. The period July-November saw the highest monthly casualties of the war as German resistance was fierce. Significant actions were fought around Kiwa and Lindi. In October the only major pitched battle of the war took place over four days at Mahindi. Both sides took heavy losses but the British could tolerate them; von Lettow could not. Consequently, and despite the best efforts of the British, he abandoned the colony and marched his remaining forces into Portuguese East Africa on 25 November 1917, where he intended to live off of the land.

The final phase of the war saw von Lettow-Vorbeck's forces being chased around Portuguese territory by a mostly KAR force. The Germans were adept at staying ahead of the pursuing British and all attempts to corner him failed. In August von Lettow-Vorbeck began a long march north around the top of Lake Nyasa and then moved into northern Rhodesia. The last action of the campaign took place on 12 November when there was a skirmish between von Lettow-Vorbeck's column and a unit of the KAR. Shortly afterwards he learnt of the Armistice and on 25 November 1918 he surrendered his remaining force of 1,300 troops at Abercorn in northern Rhodesia.

The first British rifle shot of the war had been fired by an African soldier from the Gold Coast, Regimental Sergeant Major Alhaji

8.14 Wireless operators Beho Ju (Beho Beho) January 1917 © IWM

Grunshi of the West African Frontier Force (*The First World War* - Hew Strachan); the final shot of the war was probably fired by an African soldier from the King's African Rifles in Rhodesia.

Transport & Supply

Mechanical transport stopped during the rainy season and any draught animals entering the tsetse fly zone had a maximum life span of six weeks. In 1916 the wastage rate of draught animals ran to just under 300 % or about 48,000 animals. To put this in perspective the next highest rate was in Egypt which in the same period had a 14% wastage rate. The only consistently reliable method of transport throughout the East African campaign was the African porter. Carrier logistics were complicated and demanded huge numbers of men. A carrier component of 160,000 was needed to keep the 27,000 men of the 1916 force package in the field. Raising the required number of porters was difficult and strained the relationships between the civil and military authorities. Impressment was required in some circumstances and the huge numbers of porters added an additional strain to an already inadequate medical department.

Environment and Health

East Africa was a debilitating environment which adversely affected the troops; this was particularly so when they were exhausted and undernourished, as was the case on many occasions during the 1916 offensive. Entire units were put out of action by disease. The native carriers received lower rations and during the rainy seasons were worked incredibly hard. This made them more susceptible to disease than the combatants. In total as many troops died of disease as were killed by the enemy during the fighting in East Africa.

8.15 Nigerian Brigade H. Q. Ponies at Morogoro, June 1917 © IWM

The Germans actively planned their operations to exploit these conditions. Tsetse fly areas were not fixed and the German deployments were deliberately designed to draw South African mounted units into fly infested areas.

The African bush also presented the British troops with unique difficulties. Movement through it was extremely difficult and fighting in it was likened to the conduct of night operations because of the very limited visibility. Effective tactics were similar to those associated with fighting in dense jungle.

The official history sums the overall effects of the environment as follows:

8.16 A Family party; wives in a standing camp © IWM

"It illustrated, in fact, a military truism: that in such country the ground itself, the difficulties of transport and supply, and the lack of railways and good roads, must always operate against the side which seeks a decision."[9]

African Troops

A key lesson from the war was the simple fact that the troops best suited to fight in Africa, particularly the bush, were native Africans. Properly trained and equipped they were far more effective at operating in the harsh environment, were easier to sustain and less susceptible to disease than non-African soldiers. This was recognised at the time and is the reason why the KAR was expanded. Its fifteen-fold expansion in three years was a major administrative achievement, but meant that predominantly South African and Indian troops had to conduct the 1916 East African offensive, learning bush fighting techniques as they went along.

Mapping & Local Knowledge

Across the whole theatre mapping, away from the coastlines, was at best poor and in many cases absent. It was not always the case, but generally the deeper into German territory the British moved, the worse their knowledge of the geography became. To the extent that on occasion entire river courses took them by surprise. Armed with better maps and local knowledge the Germans were better adapted to the local conditions from the outset. Lack of good quality information (or the willingness to pay heed to it) also exacerbated the transport and environmental problems experienced by the British. In 1916 Smuts did not understand the East African rainy season cycles, nor did he appreciate the effect they would have on his transport and operations.

Leadership

British leadership in Togo and Cameroon was adequate, probably in large part due to the fact that the deployed forces were mostly African and therefore well adapted to the terrain on which they fought. WAFF officers were professional soldiers well versed in the unique issues relating to Africa. This was undoubtedly an advantage but was offset by their lack of experience in respect of larger scale conventional operations.

8.17 Nigerian Brigade machine gun at Mpangas, covering approach from the East on bank of the Rufiji, May 1917 © IWM

South African leadership in South-West Africa was good. They understood the terrain and the forces were optimised for the manoeuvre campaign that was undertaken.

South African leadership in East Africa was not good. Smuts misunderstood the differences between East and West Africa and his attempts to replicate Botha's campaign using a similarly structured force worked, but at huge cost. He also underestimated the resilience of the enemy believing that the gains of 1916 would end the war.

He was a professional politician turned amateur general and his approach to, and conduct of the 1916 campaign, was driven as much by political considerations as it was by military ones. These deficiencies were exacerbated by the absence of a professional supporting staff.

The East African force was a corps sized force operating autonomously over very difficult terrain. As such it should have had a mature headquarters and extensive services. Neither the Indian Army nor the South Africans provided that structure or the professional military staff required to make it run. Very few of the staff officers had any formal training.

Strategic Assessment/ Consequences

The war in Africa was a strategic victory for Britain and its allies. Germany's colonies along with their ports and communications facilities had been neutralised by the end of 1915 and this left Britain in command of the seas and freely able to move imperial resources around the globe. Had the fighting stopped there, then the war could be judged an unqualified success as the original objectives of the Offensive Sub-Committee had been achieved. It serves as a good illustration of how difficult it can be to adhere to a perfectly good strategy when other non-military pressures come to bear.

Unfortunately a variety of largely non-military considerations drew Britain away from its original clarity of purpose and led to the militarily unnecessary offensive operations against German East Africa. The cost of those operations adds a considerable qualification to what would have been an otherwise unambiguous assessment of victory.

Although von Lettow-Vorbeck's objective was to tie down British forces and deny them to the Western Front, it is unlikely that any significant numbers of troops deployed in East Africa would have been used in France. However the resources required to sustain the forces in East Africa were huge, particularly in respect of the shipping and its cost. The operations in East Africa did not therefore affect the outcome of the war in any significant way. They did however add a considerable amount to the overall price of Britain's victory.

Fiscal costs aside, perhaps the most long term consequences of the fighting were felt by the native Africans. Large numbers of non-combatant Africans were killed or disabled by their war service. This loss of adult males had a detrimental effect on the subsistence farming economies, as did the material damage caused by the fighting and presence of large numbers of troops. All of this combined to create a population which was exhausted and malnourished by the end of the war and one which was therefore much more vulnerable to the ravages of Spanish Influenza.

8.18 Nigerian Brigade machine gun at Mpangas, covering approach from the East on bank of the Rufiji, May 1917 © RAHT

Further Reading

Hew Strachan, *The First World War in Africa (*New York: OUP, 2004), gives the best strategic overview of the war in Africa. It also covers the multi-national and political aspects which have been largely ignored in this essay.

Charles Lucas - Editor, *The Empire at War Vol IV* (OUP 1924), provides some good broad overviews of the campaigns as well as details about the efforts of the colonial administrations.

Moberly, *Official History of the War - Military Operations - Togoland and The Cameroons* (HMSO, 1931). Tactical operations, including mapping, of the campaigns in Togoland and Cameroon are covered in great detail by the official history.

Brigadier-General Howard Gorges, *The Great War in West Africa* (Naval & Military Press, 2004). Brigadier-General Gorges was the Colonel-Commandant of the West African Regiment and an experienced colonial soldier. His memoir provides a very readable and colourful account of the fighting in Togoland and Cameroon as well as some good general background about West Africa.

Edward Paice, *Tip and Run* (Phoenix, 2007), gives a balanced, comprehensive and readable account of the war in East Africa is provided by. It is the best of the secondary accounts of the East African campaign.

*Official History of the War - Military Operations - East Africa, (*Vol 1, Hordern, HMSO, 1941). The tactical detail, including mapping, of the campaign in East Africa up until September 1916 is covered by the official history, The second volume dealing with the final two years of the war was never published but Hordern does include some useful wider 'General Considerations' in his final chapter.

John Murray, *General Smuts' Campaign in East Africa* (London: Crowe, 1918). General Smuts' Campaign in East Africa was written by the Commander Royal Artillery with the South African Force immediately after the end of the war. It is interesting as a first-hand account, but also for Smuts' introduction where he summarises his conduct of the campaign and asserts that unless East Africa had been occupied it would have served as a base from which the Germans could have conquered large parts of Africa.

The East African Force 1915-1919 (London: Ferndall, Witherby, 1921), is another first-hand account by a staff officer that is useful for issues of administration, supply and transport.

Further Reading

Hodges, *The Carrier Corps. Military Labour in the East African Campaign 1914-18* (Greenwood Press, 1986). This provides useful detail on the scale, structure and operations of the porters. Chapter 9 is particularly useful for its discussion of carrier logistics.

The Official History of the Union of South Africa - The Great War (Reprinted by The Naval and Military Press). This provides a good military overview of the campaigns in South-West and East Africa, as well as the Boer Revolt.

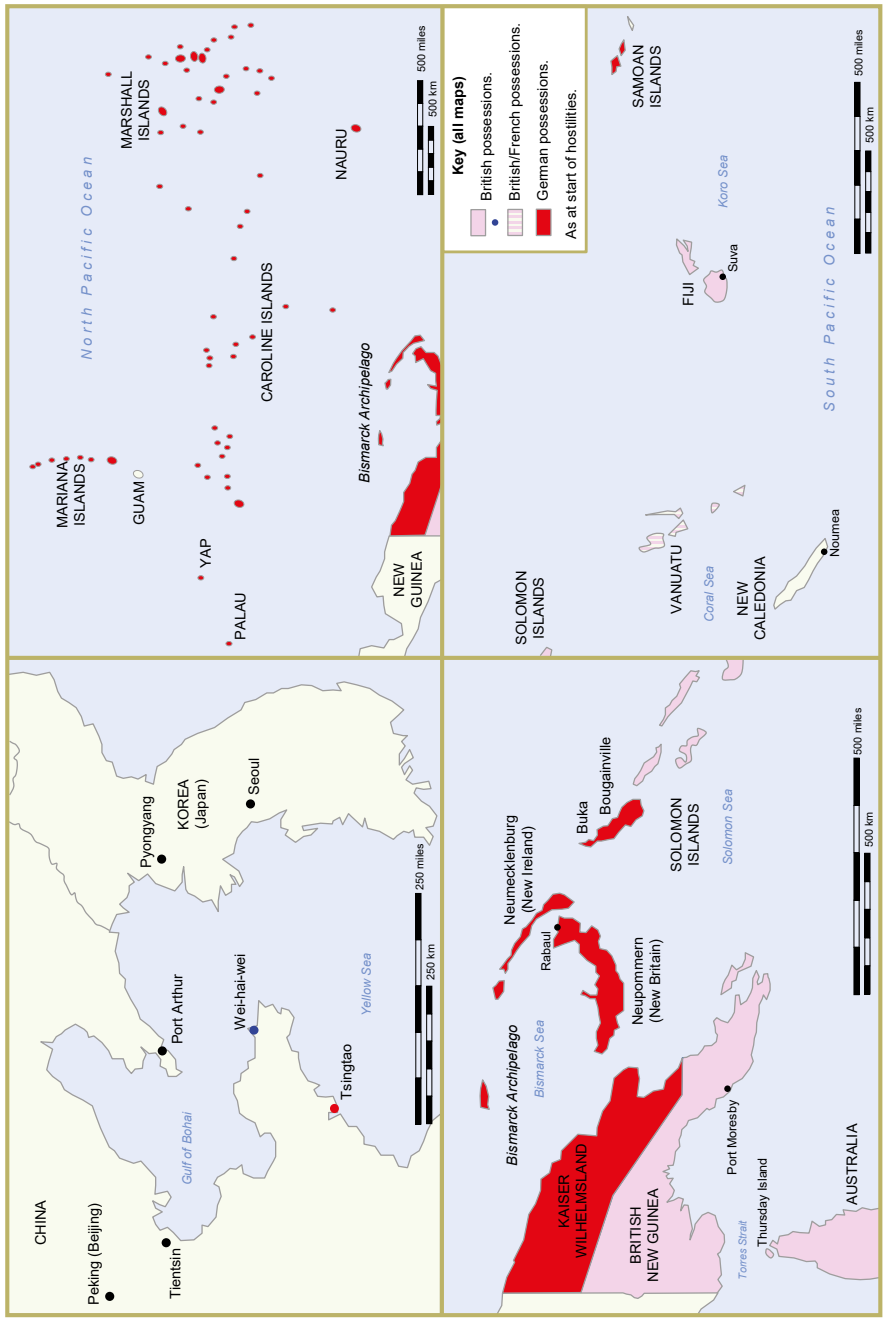
Von Lettow, *East African Campaigns (*New York: Robert Spellar, 1957). This a useful commentary from the other side of the hill.

Moyse-Bartlett, *The King's African Rifles* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1956). This provides detail on the operations and expansion of the KAR during the East African campaign.

Haywood & Clarke, *The History of the West African Frontier Force* (Naval & Military Press, reprinted 2015). This provides a good general overview of the WAFF and its operations in East and West Africa.

Endnotes

1. Only six infantry battalions of the British Army fought in the theatre: 2nd Loyal North Lancs; 25th Royal Fusiliers; 1st & 2nd West India Regiment; British West Indies Regiment; West African Regiment. They were a part of the War Office list and therefore paid by parliamentary vote to define them as 'British army' rather than the locally funded colonial forces such as the WAFF & KAR. The WIR & WAR were the pre-war regular garrisons for the coaling stations on the west coast.
2. The British South Africa Company was established following the amalgamation of Cecil Rhodes' Central Search Association and the London-based Exploring Company Ltd which had originally competed to exploit the expected mineral wealth of Mashonaland but united because of common economic interests and to secure British government backing. The company received a Royal Charter in 1889 modelled on that of the British East India Company.
3. A Schutze is a 19th Century term for a skirmishing infantryman.
4. Brigadier Charles Dobell, the Inspector General of the West African Frontier Force was on leave in London and able to provide the Offensive Sub-Committee with well-informed appreciations and plans.
5. The First World War, Vol 1, p.495, Hew Strachan.
6. The small Spanish enclave of Muni was located on the Southern coastal border.
7. Official History of the War: Military Operations - East Africa, Hordern. HMSO, 1941. Page 515.
8. The Times, London, March 13, 1917 quoting General Smuts.
9. Official History of the War: Military Operations - East Africa, Hordern. HMSO, 1941. Page 513



Map 9.1 The Pacific

9. The Sea - The War in the Pacific

Professor Eric Grove

	Tsingtao	
	Allied	**German**
Commanders	Lt General Mitsuomi Kamio Major-General Barnardiston	Captain Alfred Meyer-Waldeck
Forces	28,000 Japanese 2,150 British Empire	4,500; 1,500 Marines; 3,000 others; Naval personnel (including Austro-Hungarian), Polizeitruppen , reservists and volunteers
Context	Japan's attempt to capture the main German base in the Pacific and its hinterland to give it a further foothold in China; part of a general attempt led by the British to destroy German maritime infrastructure in the region to safeguard sea communications and drive away the German East Asian Squadron.	
Casualties	Japanese - 236 killed, 1,282 wounded British Empire - 12 killed, 53 wounded	German - 199 dead, 504 wounded
Consequences	Final destruction of the German Imperial presence in the Pacific. The German East Asian Squadron was forced into South American waters where it was eventually sunk. The Japanese occupied the former German territory until the end of 1922 but were then forced to return it to Chinese sovereignty. They did however retain Germany's 'economic privileges' in the Shantung peninsula including railway, mining and telegraph rights and all ex-German property. Japan also retained the Pacific island possessions it had occupied.	
Lessons	The vulnerability of a coastal naval base when command of the sea has been lost, the necessary synergy of naval and military power in successful maritime operations, the power of contemporary defensive weapons to allow a much weaker force to hold off for a significant period superior forces both on land and at sea and the increasing utility of aircraft, especially when deployed by sea.	

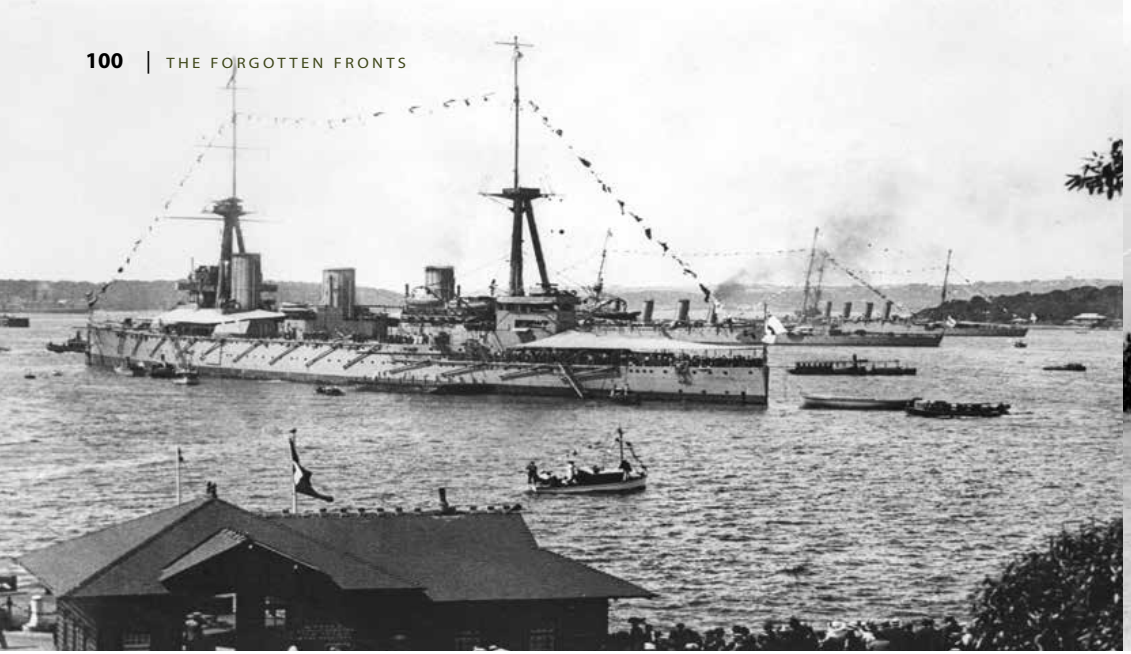
Introduction

The Second World War in the Pacific is well known. What is much less well remembered are the campaigns fought in 1914 by the British and Japanese Empires against Germany's Empire in the Pacific. The latter included Germany's settlement and base at Tsingtao on the Chinese coast. It also included German New Guinea; Kaiser Wilhelmsland (the north eastern part of New Guinea itself) the Bismarck Archipelago with its two main islands Neupommern and Neumecklenburg (New Britain and New Ireland), the German Solomon Islands (Bougainville and Buka plus smaller islands), the Carolines, Palau, Nauru, the Marshall Islands and the Marianas (except American Guam captured from Spain in 1898). There was also German Western Samoa created after the partition of Samoa between the USA and the German Empire in 1900.

These colonies provided wireless stations and other support for the German East Asian Squadron which threatened Allied sea communications. There were wireless stations at Tsingtao, Anguar (in the Palaus) Yap (in the Carolines) , Rabaul (Neupommern), Nauru and Apia (W Samoa). On 6 August 1914 London requested Australia produce a force to take the stations at Rabaul, Yap and Nauru.

The Empire Mobilises

For the operations in the Pacific an Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (AN&MEF) was organised separately from the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). Recruitment began on 11 August 1914. Assembled in Sydney by Colonel James Legge it comprised a First Battalion of 1,070 men commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Russell Watson and a Second Battalion composed of 485 Royal Australian Navy reservists and ex- Royal Navy personnel under Commander Joseph Beresford. There also were two machine gun sections, signals and medical units. The Force was brought up to strength with five hundred volunteers from the Kennedy Regiment of the Queensland Militia that had been sent to Thursday Island in the Torres Strait. By 19 August the main body of the AN&MEF, commanded by Colonel William Holmes, embarked at Sydney in the recently commissioned armed merchant cruiser HMAS *Berrima*.



9.1 HMAS *Australia 1*, 1913 fleet entry © Australian Defence

9.2 HMAS *Warrego 1* in Welhi, Timor, 21st June 1917 © Australian Defence

Samoa

The first priority laid down from London was, however, the taking of Samoa. The New Zealand Government on 7 August was asked urgently to seize the wireless station at Apia. New Zealand had had its eye on German Samoa for some time and jumped at the opportunity. On that day a New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF) began mobilisation for general Imperial service. An advance 'Samoa Expeditionary Force' of 1,383 men was formed under Colonel Robert Logan of the New Zealand Staff Corps from the Auckland and Wellington Territorial Regiments, D Battery of the New Zealand Artillery, and engineer, signals and medical units. It sailed from Wellington on 12 August in the transports *Monowai* and *Moeraki* with an escort of the Royal Navy New Zealand Squadron's three rather old light cruisers *Psyche, Philomel* and *Pyramus*.

Rear Admiral Sir George Patey and his Australian Fleet Unit led by the powerful battle cruiser HMAS Australia had, on 9 August, assembled south of Port Moresby in British New Guinea. His intention was to attack the German anchorage Rabaul where he hoped to find the German Squadron. He planned for the light cruiser HMAS *Sydney* to lead a torpedo attack by the three Australian destroyers *Paramatta, Warrego* and *Yarra*. The German wireless station was to be destroyed.

Nothing was found, not even the wireless station that was hidden far inland. The Australians had to content themselves with the destruction of all obvious communications facilities. Nothing more could be done without the more powerful landingforces that were assembling at Sydney. Meanwhile the RN C-in C China Vice Admiral Sir Thomas Jerram led a bombardment of the wireless station at Yap with the cruiser HMS *Minotaur* and light cruiser HMS *Newcastle*. The station was pounded to a wreck.

At this time Patey got the first news that the New Zealand expedition to Samoa was ready to sail. It was eventually arranged to rendezvous with the troop convoy at Noumea, New Caledonia. Patey sailed from Port Moresby on 17 August. The same day the requisitioned steamer *Kanowna* with the Queensland Militia contribution to the AN&MEF on board sailed from Thursday Island for Port Moresby.

On 21 August HMAS *Australia* and the light cruiser HMAS *Melbourne* arrived at Noumea finding the New Zealand transports, the three old light cruisers and the French armoured cruiser *Montcalm* (flagship of French Naval Forces in the Far East). The force then moved on to Suva in Fiji to coal and to collect interpreters and guides. It sailed on 27 August with high hopes of meeting (and defeating) the German squadron. It arrived off Apia on the morning of 30 August (local time). Admiral Patey sent in a whaler from HMS *Psyche* under flag of truce with a demand to surrender; there was no resistance from the defenders which comprised only fifty four Polizeitruppen and thirty ceremonial guards. The Expeditionary Force landed and occupied the island, the British flag being hoisted at 0800 on 31 August 1914.

The ships now departed some to cover the planned Australian operation against German New Guinea, others to transport the main body of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force to Egypt. Then on 8 September the main units of the German squadron, the armoured cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* commanded by Vice Admiral Graf von Spee appeared off Samoa looking for Allied warships. Nothing was found and Spee had no forces to attempt a landing. Neither did he wish to bombard a recently German colony. Spee therefore sailed off, eventually arriving off South America.

The Fate of Von Spee

After *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* had appeared off Samoa on the 14th, von Spee, reinforced by the light cruiser *Nurnberg*, moved on to Papiete, capital of of the French colony of Tahiti. He wanted supplies but was engaged by shore batteries and so bombarded the town and and sank the disarmed gunboat *Zelee*. Then he moved to Easter Island where he met the light cruisers *Leipzig* and *Dresden* and seven supply ships. Replenished, he then moved to Mas-a-fuera an island 500 miles west of Valparaiso.

On 1 November off Coronel in Chile von Spee came into contact with the local British cruiser squadron led by Rear Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock. It was composed of HMS *Good Hope* and HMS *Monmouth*, the light cruiser *Glasgow* and the armed merchant cruiser *Otranto*. The large British cruisers were manned by ill trained reservists unlike the highly trained ships' companies in *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, probably the best gunners in the Imperial Navy The two German armoured cruisers were also more modern and more heavily armed It was therefore a one sided action, the Germans taking advantage of the sunset. The two large British cruisers went down with the loss of all hands, 1,654 men in total. *Monmouth* was finished off by *Nurnberg*; *Glasgow* and *Otranto* got away. It was the worst British defeat at sea for a very long time.

Spee sailed for Valparaiso where he prevented too great a celebration of his victory, having an almost fatalistic appreciation of British naval superiority. Despite that, he now intended to attack the Falkland Islands on his way home, to destroy the wireless station and take the Governor prisoner as retaliation for Samoa. Not all his officers were happy with this plan, preferring to avoid the Falklands, but von Spee was determined. It was a serious mistake.

Falkland Islands

The Admiralty was stirred into action by the tragedy of Coronel. The new First Sea Lord, Fisher, was determined to deal with Von Spee and sent Vice Admiral Sir Doveton Sturdee whom he blamed as Admiralty Chief of Staff for Coronel, to rectify the situation as C-in-C South Atlantic and Pacific. Sturdee sailed with two battle cruisers, *Invincible* and *Inflexible* on 11 November.

Sturdee arrived at the Albrolhos Rocks at 26 November, where he met Rear Admiral Stoddart with four cruisers, two light cruisers (including *Glasgow)* and an armed merchant cruiser. He had already been ordered to concentrate at the Falkland Islands. On that day von Spee left St Quentin Bay, bound through stormy waters round Cape Horn for the Atlantic. The stage was being set for a final show-down. Spee was expecting a relatively weak British squadron to be in the Falklands, that could be defeated as at Coronel and then the islands would be occupied by landing parties.

On 7 December Sturdeee arrived at the Falklands. The intention was to move around Cape Horn to seek out von Spee but on 8 December a signal station established on Sapper Hill by the old battleship HMS Canopus defending the islands reported 'strange ships' approaching. These were *Gneisenau* and *Nurnberg* instructed to reconnoitre and destroy the wireless station. Canopus had registered her guns and fired disturbingly accurate 12-in rounds that caused the German cruisers to turn away.

As fast as it could, Sturdee's squadron raised steam for sea. The weather was fine with good visibilty and the British ships had the Germans in sight from the start. Sturdee signalled 'General Chase' A little before 1300 *Inflexible* opened fire on the aftermost German ship the light cruiser *Leipzig*, followed shortly afterwards

9.3 Admiral Jackie Fisher © NPG

by *Invincible*. Spee now ordered his light cruisers to disperse under cover of *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*. Despite less than perfect British gunnery the Germans were totally outclassed by the battle cruisers' 12-in guns.

Scharnhorst rapidly sank with a heavy list to port at 1617 hours; there were no survivors. *Gneisenau* was assailed by both battle cruisers and the cruiser Carnarvon. She eventually sank; 598 men were lost and about 250 were picked up.

The German light cruisers made their escape at about 1325 hours. *Leipzig* was engaged by *Glasgow* and demolished by the 6-in guns of the cruiser *Cornwall* firing high effect lyddite shells. Only four officers and fourteen men were saved. HMS *Kent* another 'County' class cruiser worked miracles of speed, reportedly making 25 knots in pursuit of *Nurnberg*. The latter's hard pressed boilers failed and the German light cruiser was shot to pieces by the British cruiser's 6-in guns; seven men were saved. Only *Dresden* escaped, although she could not escape the British in the end and, worn out, was run down at Robinson Crusoe Island in the Juan Fenandez Islands and scuttled in March 1915. The German East Asian Squadron, the last relic of German power in the Pacific, had finally ceased to exist.

German New Guinea

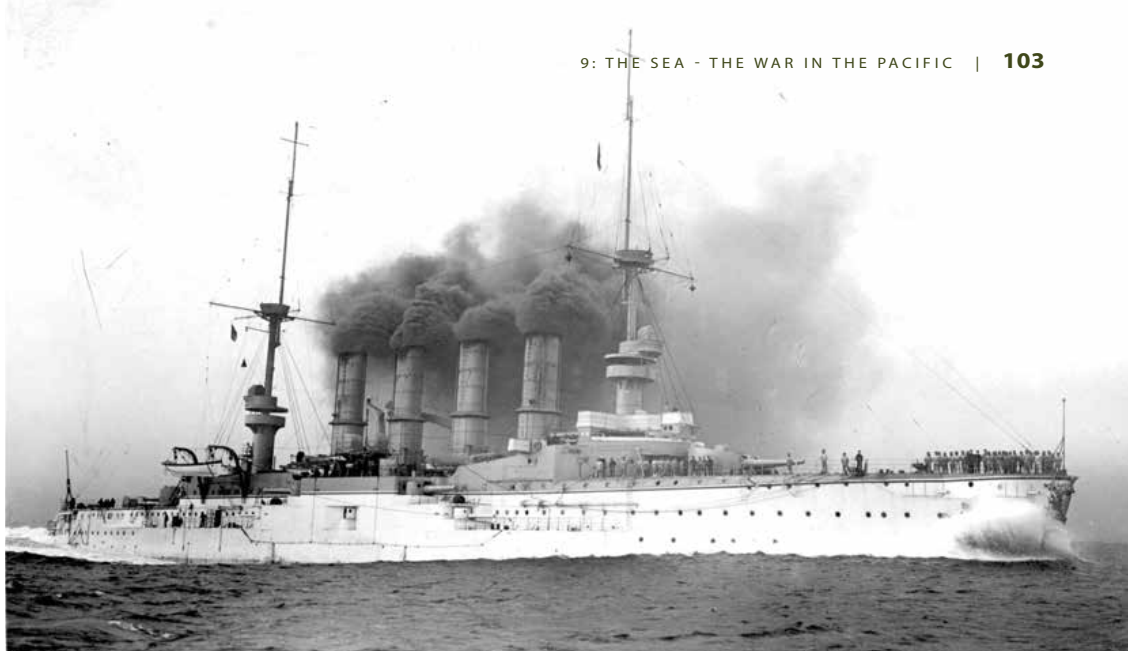
The progressive taking of Germany's maritime infrastructure in the Pacific had played a key role in forcing Spee eastwards. Samoa had, however, delayed the attack on German New Guinea for three weeks. The AN&MEF had halted first at the Palm Islands off Townsville, The opportunity was taken at Palm Island to give vital training to the untrained expeditionary force.

On 4 September the force concentrated at Port Moresby. Two days later, Holmes inspected the Queensland troops. He found the officers to be incompetent and the men too immature or too old and he recommended they be sent home. There seemed little alternative when, as the ships sailed on the 7th, Kenowna's stokers (who did not expect to be sent on active service) went on strike. The ship returned to Townsville with volunteers from the troops stoking the boilers.

The Australian ships were bound for Rossel Lagoon off the eastern point of New Guinea. Before rendezvousing with this force Patey sent HMAS *Melbourne* to destroy the wireless station at Nauru. The light cruiser arrived off the island on 9 September. A landing party of twenty five was sent ashore. It took possession of the pier and then marched on the Governor's residence. The Germans surrendered unconditionally and the landing party smashed the wireless station and poured water into the alternators. The cruiser sailed for Rabaul in the afternoon, mission accomplished.

On 9 September the ships from Port Moresby, met up with the flagship. The commanders were given 'Operational Order Number Three' for the capture of Rabaul and Herbertshohe, the current and former capitals of the colony. Patey had been given to understand there might be two wireless stations close to Rabaul, one south of Herbertshohe and the other to the east south of Kabakaul. Small naval landing parties were considered sufficient for both objectives.

As the fleet approached Neupommern HMAS *Sydney* was sent forward with the destroyers to reconnoitre potential



9.4 Cruiser SMS *Scharnhorst* (1906-1914), German Imperial Navy © Naval Historical Centre

anchorages. To deal with the radio stations the light cruiser was also carrying a landing party of fifty ratings and three officers from the Royal Australian Naval Reserve's Port Melbourne Division under Lieutenant Richard Bowen, with two army medical personnel attached. It was found that that the coast was clear and that Rabaul Jetty was suitable for landing troops. HMAS *Sydney* split her landing party transferring Bowen and twenty seven men to the destroyers *Warrego* and *Yarra*. *Sydney* then landed the other half of the company reinforced by some of her own sailors commanded by the cruiser's First Lieutenant, Lieutenant Commander Finlayson. He was carrying a letter from Patey calling for surrender which Finlayson passed to a German to be sent on to Governor, Eduard Haber The reservists advanced inland; they found no station existed and returned to the cruiser in the afternoon.

Things were different where the actual wireless station lay. The destroyers landed their party at the small jetty at Kabakaul, each man carrying rations and 100 rounds. Locals were threatened with shooting if they did not reveal the location of the station, which was inland at Bita Paka. Two horses were commandeered to carry packs and the sailors began to advance led by two understandably nervous Melanesians. After less than a mile the first German forces were spotted. The defenders of the two islands comprised sixty one Germans (all but two reservists) and 240 native Polizeitruppen armed with old single shot Mauser Kar 71 carbines. Of the latter troops, sixty eight were defending the wireless station. Two pipe mines had been laid on the road between Kabakaul and Bita Paka and several trenches had been dug with prepared firing marks to assist defensive fire.

The Australians soon had the upper hand. A scouting section on the right flank spotted about twenty four Polizeitruppen observing the advance. Petty Officer Palmer in charge shot the German commander and the Polizeitruppen scattered. Bowen forced the wounded officer out at gunpoint to call on his forces to surrender bluffing that 800 Australians were approaching. Meyer and another German were soon captured with accurate maps of the area. The rumour of a large force reached Von Klewitz the overall German commander who withdrew his forces inland to Toma, unhinging the defence of the island.

The immediate defenders of the wireless station still had to be dealt with. One sailor, Able Seaman Bill Williams had already been mortally wounded by a Polizeitruppen sniper; he was the first Australian casualty of the war. Shortly after attending to Williams, the Australian Army medical officer with the landing party Captain Pockley was also killed. Reinforcements were called for and fifty nine more men were landed under Yarra's First Lieutenant, Gerald Hill. The sailors had not expected to have to go ashore; a lack of preparation symbolised by Yarra's cook advancing still wearing his white hat and armed with a revolver and a cutlass!

The heterogeneous force attacked the first German trench. To reinforce Patey sent HMAS *Berrima* to Kabakaul and two naval companies of the AN&MEF and an army machine gun company were landed under Commander Beresford. A company and a half were sent forward and they reached the front line at 1300 mounting a bayonet charge. Lieutenant Commander Elwell commanding No 6 Naval Company was killed sword in hand but the defenders of the trench, three Germans and twenty Polizeitruppen, surrendered at a cost of three more Australians killed and five wounded. The mines were ineffective as the man meant to detonate then from a lookout tree had fallen ill and not been replaced. The senior German officer present Leutnant Kempf was escorted back to Beresford and surrender was agreed. A reinforced half company and the machine gun company were

9.5 Forward QF 4.7-inch guns on the armed merchant cruiser HMS Empress of Russia © City of Vancouver Archives Wiki

sent forward under Lieutenant Thomas Bond with Kempf and a Feldwebel Ritter to enforce the terms.

As the defenders of the trenches were disarmed, more Polizeitruppen on the flanks opened fire. The Australians replied, killing ten or more. Ritter tried to rally German resistance and Bond shot him. As the skirmish was won Bond left fifteen men and the machine gun section to guard the prisoners and with Kempf, a military intelligence officer and an interpreter advanced on the police barracks. Some very startled German officers were disarmed by the audacious Bond and twenty German Polizeitruppen surrendered also. The Germans had already brought down the aerials of the Bita Paka radio station and Bond took his prisoners forward to its deserted remains. There they were eventually relieved and the destruction of instruments and machinery was completed.

The Battle of Bita Paka, their first day of land combat in the war, cost the Australians ten casualties, six of which were killed. One German and thirty Polizeitruppen had been killed, some of the latter reportedly bayoneted after being captured; one German and ten Polizeitruppen were wounded. The campaign had been a victory for bluff and boldness helped by a good dose of luck. Lieutenant Bond received a most well earned DSO.

HMAS Berrima landed the last of the AN&MEF at Rabaul on 13 September and to the strains of 'God Save the King' the British flag was raised at 1500. HMAS *Australia, Melbourne* and *Sydney* fired a 21 gun salute. The Germans, however , had not officially surrendered the colony. Sniping continued around Herbertshohe so Patey and Holmes agreed to mount an attack on Toma. Two companies of the AN&MEF were landed at Herbertshohe at 0500 on 14 September, together with a 12-pdr field gun from HMAS *Sydney.* The light cruiser HMAS *Encounter* fired forty eight rounds of 6" gunfire at the ridge where the Germans had built defences. They were unmanned but the bursting shells had useful effect on German morale. As the Australians approached Toma they engaged some Polizeitruppen, with two 12-pdr shells completing the collapse of resistance. Assured that Governor Haber would begin negotiations with Holmes on the 15th the troops withdrew and on 17 September all German territories administered from Rabaul were surrendered. On the 21st the Governor, twenty one Germans and 110 Polizeitruppen marched into Herbertshohe to surrender and be disarmed.

HMAS *Australia* and *Montcalm* joined the cruiser HMAS *Encounter* to cover an expedition to take Friedrich Wilhelmshafen (Madang) the main German settlement on the coast of Kaiser Wilhelmsland. In HMAS *Berrima* Holmes embarked four companies and the expedition sailed on 22 September. It was completed without opposition in forty eight hours while *Sydney* went to Anguar in the Palaus to destroy Germany's last Pacific wireless station outside Tsingtao.

Tsingtao

The Allied position in the Pacific had been transformed by the entry into the war of Britain's ally, Japan. The British hoped to limit Japanese activities to the Germans in China but by October 1914 the Japanese had taken the German Marianas, Carolines, Marshalls and Palaus. Nevertheless, their main target remained the prosperous German colony of Kiaochow on the Shantung Peninsula with its capital at Tsingtao. On the evening of 15 August Japan gave Germany an ultimatum to withdraw all armed vessels from Chinese and Japanese waters and to hand over the Kiaochow colony. If this was not done the Japanese Government would take whatever measures were deemed necessary. The ultimatum expired at midday on Sunday 23 August 1914 and the result was war.

9.6 Allied troops inside one of Tsingtao's forts, November 1914 © NAM

The German Defences

The German Governor, Captain Alfred Meyer-Waldeck, a naval officer, had a force of about 1,500 marines in four infantry companies; a mounted company of 140 men, an artillery battery with six 77mm guns, 108 engineers and two machine gun units. The local III Seebattaillon had been enhanced by the East Asian Marine Detachment from Peking and Tientsin. There were 180 reservists in the colony who could be called up plus about sixty Chinese Polizeitruppen. These were soon reinforced by thousands of Germans between the ages of eighteen and forty five who arrived at Tsingtao from many parts of Asia both by sea and land. By the outbreak of war the garrison had risen to perhaps as many as 4,500 housed in the Moltke Barracks. The new arrivals began training as soon as they arrived although some took over as firemen and similar duties to release more experienced men to fight. The garrison was also augmented by members of the ship's company of the old Austro-Hungarian cruiser *Kaiserin Elisabeth* which had taken refuge at Tsingtao. Some of her eight 5.9" and sixteen 47mm guns were taken ashore to form the Batterie Elisabeth but the ship remained operational with her remaining men and weapons.

Meyer-Waldeck prepared defences against attack from sea and land. Five thousand mines were laid outside the harbour. These were backed up by the torpedo boat S-90 and the surviving operational German gunboat, *Jaguar.* The latter's three sisters and the old cruiser *Kormoran* were disarmed to enhance the shore defences with 4.1" guns and men, and to equip and man the two armed merchant cruisers *Prinz Eitel Fridrich* and *Kormoran* (a captured Russian ship that took the identity of the disarmed cruiser). The main position was Fort A on Hulchuen Point, a concrete structure standing a hundred feet above the sea mounting searchlights and turret guns in 'disappearing' mountings, two 9.4" and three 5.9". Three other batteries were built by Meyer-Waldeck, the most important at Iltis Point, with thirteen guns.

From the land the one line of approach to the city was from the north over low and flat ground but then facing hilly terrain dominated by Bismarck Hill, 433 feet high. A reinforced concrete fort had been built on the hill with tunnels, ammunition hoists and a protected fire control station. Inside the tunnels were mess-rooms, kitchens, storage facilities and sleeping quarters along with engineering spaces to maintain the armament. This comprised four 11" howitzers supplemented by 4.1" guns. Based on this position the dynamic Meyer-Waldeck had troops and Chinese coolies build three lines of defence utilising the good terrain, The defences were all completed, manned and armed before the Japanese declaration of war. There was a shortage of modern German guns and anything available had to be used including old Chinese pieces and Krupp veterans of 1871. The batteries were largely manned by naval personnel.

British Preparations

When war had broken out between the British Empire and the German Empire, Admiral Jerram had been ordered by the Admiralty to concentrate at Hong Kong where his fleet was mobilising. His major asset was the battleship HMS *Triumph* in reserve. It was intended she be manned with the crews of demobilised river gunboats but there were not enough of them. It had been intended to use Chinese seamen to complete the ship's company but they were not anxious to engage in active war service. Jerram and General Kelly commanding troops in South China therefore arranged for volunteers from the garrison to be called for. Two officers, six signallers and a hundred men from the Second Battalion the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry were chosen from the many volunteers to complete Triumph's

complement. A little later the armed merchant cruisers Empress of Asia, Empress of Russia, Empress of Japan and Himalaya were also manned with mixed crews of Royal Naval Reservists, men from French Yangtse gunboats and soldiers from the Royal Garrison Artillery and the Pathan Sepoys.

When she was ready for sea Captain Fitzmaurice of HMS *Triumph*, along with five destroyers was sent to watch Tsingtao and stop shipping getting in or out. He needed additional ships to mount an effective blockade and not until 20 August was this achieved with the arrival of the French armoured cruiser *Dupleix*, light cruiser HMS *Yarmouth* and armed merchant cruiser HMS *Empress of Asia*. Four German merchant ships bound for the Dutch East Indies were captured coming out of the port. On the 23 August, however, the destroyer HMS *Kennet* got rather the worst of an engagement with S-90 as the British boat tried to cut the German off.

It was decided to leave naval operations off Tsingtao very largely to the Japanese supplemented by HMS *Triumph* and the destroyer HMS *Usk*. Before continuing , however the British battleship moved to Wei-hai-wei to disembark her army crew members, as their regiment had been ordered to India. They had proved to be most keen and effective sailors.

Japan Prepares

On 27 August the Japanese Second Squadron arrived off Tsingtao. It was led by Vice Admiral Sadakichi Kato in the coast defence ship (pre-dreadnought battleship) *Suwo*. She was accompanied by two other first class coast defence ships *Tango* and *Iwami*. All had been captured from the Russians in 1905 as were the two Second Class Coast Defence ships *Mishima* and *Okinoshima* also sent to Tsingtao. There were also two armoured cruisers that had fought on the Japanese side in the Russo Japanese war, *Tokiwa* and *Iwate*. In early September these were replaced by the more powerful 12" gun armed cruisers *Tsukuba* and *Ikoma* that gave extra security against a possible arrival of von Spee. A third cruiser was the old *Takechiho*, classified second class coast defence ship and converted into a mine warfare vessel. There was also a flotilla of destroyers led by a light cruiser.

Kato landed parties on the islands on the edge of Kiaochow Bay to establish a minesweeping base. He drew up his ships and dictated a message to Meyer-Waldeck telling him to receive a Japanese delegation under a flag of truce. There was no question of the Governor accepting surrender terms, as he had been ordered by the Kaiser to resist to the end. With typical hyperbole Wilhelm had said it would be more of a disgrace to surrender Tsingtao to the Japanese than to surrender Berlin to the Russians! Meyer-Waldeck played for time and wirelessed to Kato that he would receive a Japanese party as soon as he was told what they wanted. Kato replied that the port and colony were now under blockade.

The German defences were further strengthened. Barbed wire was placed on beaches and bomb proof shelters dug. German forces were now organised into five battalions of infantry, with cavalry scouts, five battalions of marine artillery and 2,500 reserve officers and men for use as required. The Japanese probed the minefield finding that it could not be swept easily. Kato, however was able to bring his ships within range of Iltis Point. The Germans put up observation balloons and the Iltis Point guns near-missed the big ships forcing them to move away. On 3 September, however, far away from Tsingtao, 150 miles to the north at Lungkow, the Japanese landed the first troops from General Mitsuomi Kamio's 28, 000 strong 18th Infantry Division.

The First Actions

The first Japanese offensive action however came in a novel form. Japan had deployed its pioneer seaplane carrier *Wakamiya*. Its seaplanes reconnoitred the harbour and then began bombing raids; two Maurice Farmans damaging both the railway terminal and the barracks, inflicting casualties. One aircraft was damaged by anti-aircraft fire but made it back to the carrier. More attacks took place, hitting both the barracks and the Governor's residence.

In early September 18th Division reinforced to about 13,000 men began to advance from Langkow. Its objective was to cut Tsingtao off from rail communication inland. It took a cavalier attitude to neutral Chinese sovereignty, partly because of serious flooding that converted the direct route to the German colony into a quagmire. Despite Chinese protests the Japanese advanced ninety miles to Tsimo where the Germans had a small scouting force of a dozen men. After a brief skirmish the Germans retreated. The Japanese continued on through theoretically neutral territory towards Weihsien. They also captured the Shantung Railway and Kiaochow itself.

The Japanese moved on Lanshan, a sheltered bay eighteen miles from Tsingtao and a very suitable forward base. On the 14 September Japanese destroyers entered the bay and after minesweepers had secured it Japanese transports arrived to land the 15,000 strong siege party. The 11" siege howitzers that had proved so effective at Port Arthur less than a decade before were landed along with ammunition, field kitchens and medical facilities. Army aeroplanes were also brought ashore. To safeguard the logistical lifeline the Japanese built a narrow gauge railway with Chinese labour,

The Assault on Tsingtao

On 18 September the Japanese began their advance from Lanshan. Despite heavy resistance and heavy rain, the numerically superior Japanese steadily closed in on Tsingtao. On 22 September the British Army arrived at Lanshan in the shape of 1,650 men of Second Battalion South Wales Borderers and 500 from the the 36th Sikhs from Tientsin and Wei-hai-wei (with supporting transport mules). They came in HMS *Triumph* and a chartered Chinese merchantman; another merchantman served as a hospital ship. This deployment, commanded by Colonel (acting Brigadier) Nathaniel Barnardiston, was intended as much to exert influence over the Japanese as to assist them.

Despite continued poor weather, a combined attack was mounted on the 26 September, and the Germans were forced back once more. The allies moved forward to a mere five miles from Tsingtao. Japanese aerial bombing raids continued but the Germans were able to put up their single Taube reconnaissance aircraft that showed the Governor how dire the situation was

9.7 Major-General Barnardiston breakfasting at Divisional HQ, Chang-Tsun © NAM

becoming as the Japanese moved forward to partially invest Bismarck Hill.

To hinder this process Meyer-Waldeck sent *Jaguar*, S-90 and *Kaiserin Elisabeth* to bombard the advancing Allies. Joined by the Iltis Point battery a heavy fire was directed ashore. The Japanese countered with an air attack that forced the German ships to withdraw. The Allies were able to move forward again on the 28th and stopped two and a half miles from the Bismarck Hill fort. The Japanese moved their destroyers into Fowshanso bay to support the allied forces and to discourage future German warship movements. Shore bombardment by these boats forced the Germans to retreat further. The Germans now scuttled three of their disarmed hulks as blockships, Iltis, Luchs and Kormoran.

A high priority for Kato was to clear the minefields so he could bring his heavy units to bear against the defences and city, forcing a surrender. Minesweeping efforts were stepped up but after the loss of two Japanese minesweepers the operation was suspended. The Allied ground forces were left to mop up north of the main German defences, being forced to entrench by German fire from still commanding positions. The Taube gave German artillery enough situational awareness for it to continue to exert pressure on the besiegers; the British camp spotted from the air was forced to withdraw out of range.

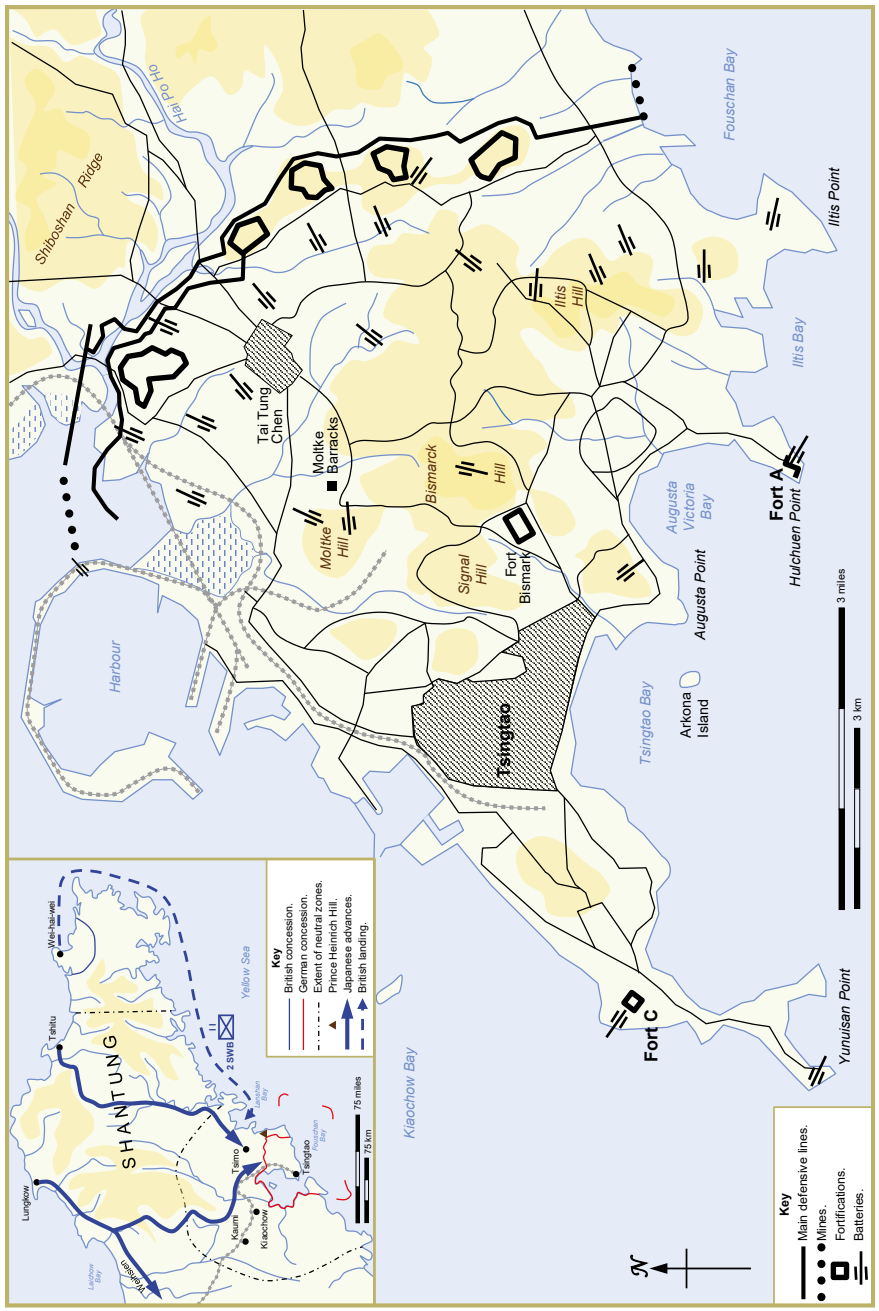
In October Kamio decided on a frontal land attack supported from the sea as closely as possible. The Japanese captured Prinz Heinrich Hill with little resistance on the 8th, Meyer-Waldeck having decided to sacrifice the position to save troops and ammunition. It looked, however as if German morale was cracking. The Japanese 11" howitzers were set in position on the height. On 10 October Kamio sent the Governor a message allowing non-combatants and neutrals to evacuate; a dozen, including the American Consul General, did so.

The attack then began, the British on the right. The Germans replied with heavy and accurate artillery fire and held the Allies at Litsun, a cavalry charge driving the Allied forces back. With the Germans firing 1,500 shells a day, the Allies were held, with casualties on both sides. They eventually achieved their initial objective but it had not been the expected walk over. After two days of heavy fighting the Germans asked for a truce so bodies could be recovered. The Germans then withdrew to prepared positions closer to the city.

A naval attack took place on the 14th with the allied ships approaching as close as possible to their main targets. Some guns of the Iltis Point battery was destroyed but the rest held out. HMS *Triumph* was heavily engaged but was hit, causing three British casualties. Japanese seaplanes, now operating from an island base, were used to bomb the German positions with some effect.

It was decided to mount a German naval counter-attack with S-90 which would then take refuge in Shanghai. She left on the night of 16-17 October and torpedoed and blew in half the mine laden *Takachiho*. Only one officer and twenty men were saved; twenty eight officers and 244 men were lost, the worst Japanese Naval loss of the whole war. S-90 had engine problems and was forced to scuttle on the China coast, her crew being interned by the Chinese.

The Allies began another bombardment but failed to notice that the buoys that marked the areas safe from mines had been moved to bring their ships in range of the German guns. HMS



Map 9.2 Tsingtao

Triumph was hit again, amidships on the port side with one man killed and six wounded. The frustrated Allies increased the intensity of their bombardment, the city itself being hit repeatedly. On 29 October the disarmed German gunboat *Tiger* was damaged and was sunk as another blockship.

The Final Assault and Surrender

A final major assault began on 31 October the anniversary of the Japanese Emperor's accession. As part of a very heavy artillery bombardment by about a hundred guns the 11" howitzers hit the oil tanks close to the harbour. Allied ships joined in firing as *Kaiserin Elisabeth* moved across the harbour to engage the attackers. The Allied ships engaged Fort A and Fort Iltis (which lost two guns) dodging the return fire. Harbour installations were destroyed, including the crane and coaling dock. In the evening an armoured train made a sortie against the British section of the line. Covered by darkness, the Allies built new trenches and repaired damaged ones. It was decided that HMS *Triumph* with her powerful armament would concentrate on Bismarck Hill.

The bombardment of Tsingtao went over the following days from both land and sea. Its electrical power station was destroyed and the floating dock partially sunk. Fort Iltis was almost completely knocked out. HMS *Triumph*, as agreed, concentrated on the Bismarck Fortress with her 10" and 7.5" guns. The fort suffered severely from the hail of armour piercing shells which penetrated the concrete and exploded within. The Germans were running out of ammunition which caused their fire to slacken. *Kaiserin Elisabeth* fired off her remaining shells and was scuttled close to *Tiger.* Under cover of bad weather the Allies advanced. The defenders were reduced to using small arms and grenades; Fort Bismarck was silent. Iltis' few remaining guns also ran out of ammunition. This allowed the Allied ships to close in and inflict serious damage. On 3 November the Japanese captured twenty six German field guns and hundreds of prisoners.

The bombardment continued the following day. A major success occurred when the Allied forces advancing on Fort Moltke captured the pumping station vital for Tsingtao's water supply. This also outflanked Fort Moltke and Fort Bismarck. Twenty new Japanese 11" howitzers now added their weight to the bombardment. By the evening of the 4 November, Meyer-Waldeck's regulars had suffered heavy losses and few remained. Sixty guns and a hundred machine guns remained but there was very little ammunition.

The Governor ordered the anti personnel shrapnel shells that had been kept in reserve to be used against the Allied forces at the edge of the fortifications but it could not turn the tide. The attack was resumed on 5 November, the normally cautious Kasio expecting, and willing, to accept heavy losses in the final assault. The fleet came in closer than ever and directed their fire on the city. That evening some of the last German shrapnel was used to inflict casualties on the Japanese, advancing with little regard for their safety. On the 6 November the German lines were heavily bombarded; the Germans replied finishing off their remaining ammunition.

At around midnight, as the Allied armies massed for the final attack, the German artillery finally fell silent and he Japanese advanced to find deserted defences. The British, less willing than the Japanese to take heavy casualties, had a narrow escape as they faced Germans armed with rifles and machine guns determined to fight to the end. The threat of being outflanked by the Japanese, however, caused the Germans to retreat. Caught on two sides by British and Japanese they suffered over fifty per cent casualties.

As the he Allies captured several significant defensive positions, the British ran into considerable opposition but intelligently used cover to blow a hole in the defences. The Germans were pushed back along the front and moved back to the forts that remained in their hands. The Japanese committed their reserves who advanced through German defences with about a third of that number of defenders to face them with small arms only. As the Japanese forces ascended the fortress hills, the waves of attackers suffered heavy casualties from German machine guns. At 0705 hours on 7 November, however, the white flag was hoisted near the Governor's palace, soon followed by similar flags over the defences. SMS *Jaguar* was scuttled. The German Empire in the Pacific had ceased to exist.

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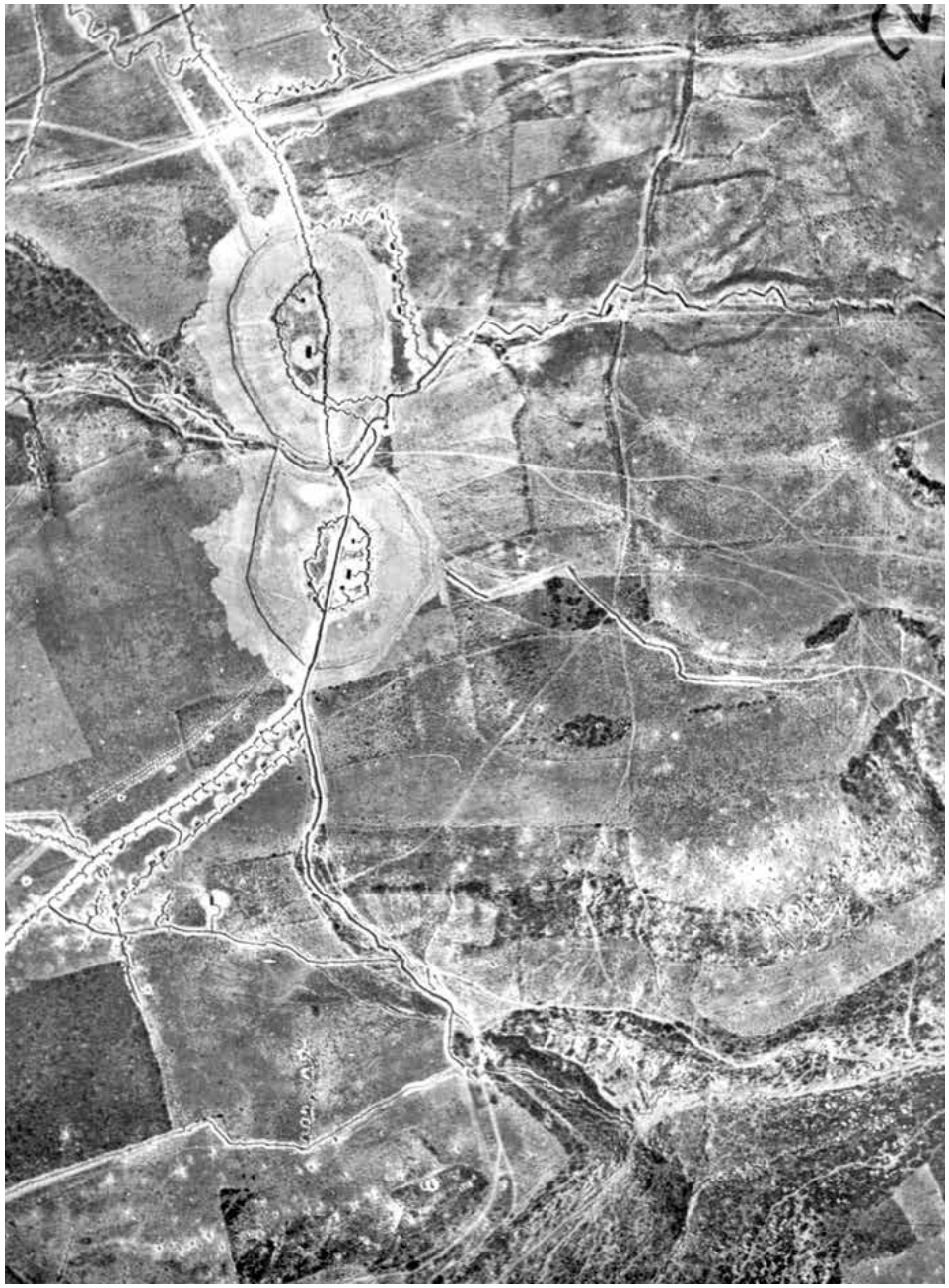


10.1 Turkish double redoubt east of Krithia, Gallipoli - Air Photography by RFC © RAF Museum

10. Overseas Air Campaigns

Sebastian Cox

Introduction

As is generally well-known, on the outbreak of War a large element of the Royal Flying Corps [RFC], in a rush of enthusiasm, decamped more or less en masse for France and Belgium, leaving a motley collection of personnel and aircraft behind in the UK. Elsewhere in the Empire the state of aviation was variable but could nowhere be said to have advanced much beyond the earliest stages of infancy. It was most advanced in India and Australia. However, the early promise shown by the infant air arm in France and Belgium was soon reflected in urgent calls for aerial units to be deployed to other fronts as the Britain's war effort expanded beyond the Western Front.

Early Operations in Egypt 1914-1915

On 4 November 1914, the day before Britain declared war on Ottoman Turkey, a flight of aircraft had been despatched to Egypt from the UK to assist in the defence of that country and more specifically the Suez Canal which was vulnerable to incursions by Turkish troops invading the Sinai from Palestine. The meagre resources initially available to support campaigns outside France and Belgium is well illustrated by the fact that this flight took along with it from the UK three Maurice Farman pusher aircraft and acquired two Henri Farmans, reputedly 'old but in flying condition[!]' from an Italian firm in Cairo. The flight was commanded by Captain S D Massy, who had commanded the pre-war Indian Flying School at Sitapur. Local contractors built an airfield at Ismailia and the Flight flew its first reconnaissance on 27 November 1914, and the area to the east of the Canal Defence Zone out into Sinai was regularly patrolled thereafter out to a depth of 45 miles.

Further reinforcements arrived in December, with a BE2a and two more Maurice Farmans arriving, engineless, from the Indian Flying School, while two engines and miscellaneous stores arrived from England, along with three more pilots. The Flight's relatively restricted reconnaissance efforts were supplemented by an early and very successful example of coalition operations when seven French Nieuport seaplanes, capable of flying longer range reconnaissance missions began to operate from converted German cargo vessels off the coast. Under the command of a French naval officer, Lieutenant de Vaiseau de L'Escaille, they flew sorties with French pilots and British observers, and these flights revealed the steady build-up of Turkish troops around Beersheba and their subsequent movement towards the Canal. To avoid the risk of flanking naval gunfire the Turks took the bold decision to move through the middle of Sinai rather than the more traditional coastal route. The Turkish forces reached the Canal early in February 1915 but were repulsed and retreated all the way back to Beersheba. They were harassed by aircraft during their advance and retreat but the effort was too small, light and spasmodic to have real effect. Thus, the first air operations outside Europe petered out as both sides redeployed their forces for operations at Gallipoli and the Sinai front essentially remained quiescent for the rest of the year. As in the early operations in France the aircraft had proved extremely valuable in their essential reconnaissance role but, for technical and other reasons, made no other worthwhile contribution.

The Dardanelles

For the early naval-only phase of the operation the Navy deployed the newly converted seaplane carrier HMS *Ark Royal* in February 1915, carrying a miscellaneous selection of aircraft types, mostly ill-suited to the task ahead, with all but one of the six seaplanes unable to operate in anything but the calmest weather. Two Sopwith Tabloid landplanes were also sent out but they could not operate from the Island of Tenedos as the resources to clear an operating strip were not available. The RNAS aircraft undertook reconnaissance, which if nothing else revealed the inaccuracy of the expedition's maps, and attempted to co-operate with the early naval bombardments with very mixed results. For the landing phase *Ark Royal's* aircraft were reinforced by 3 Squadron RNAS with eighteen aircraft of six types, which at first operated from a an airstrip on the island of Tenedos 17.5 miles from Cape Helles and 31 miles from Anzac Cove. Number 3 Squadron began operations on 28th March, barely a month before the first landings.

Nevertheless, the squadron provided much useful information, including crude photographs of the landing beaches and their environs, as well as spotting fall of shot for the warships, and bombing batteries and barracks. By June some 700 photos had been pieced together into mosaics. Originally only three trained observers came out with the Squadron, and others had to be trained from amongst volunteers from the fleet, principally drawn from 'lightweight' midshipman. The Navy also deployed a balloon-carrying vessel, HMS *Manica* [later replaced by the *Canning*] which successfully directed fire from HMS *Bacchante* against Turkish encampments on the Asiatic side.

During the initial landings No 3 Squadron flew sorties to co-operate with the Helles landings and the *Ark Royal* and *Manica* supported the Anzacs. They could do little to affect the outcome on 25th April, though *Manica's* balloon did spot for HMS *Triumph*, enabling the latter to drive off the Turkish battleship *Turgud Reis* from the Narrows, from whence she had been bombarding the transports off Anzac and causing delays in off-loading troops.

The arrival of the first German submarine in late May meant that the relatively slow *Ark Royal* was withdrawn to become a depot ship and replaced with the faster seaplane carrier HMS *Ben-my-Chree*, equipped with better aircraft. In late June Colonel Frederick Sykes[1] was seconded from the Royal Flying Corps to advise the Admiralty on air operations at Gallipoli. He recommended that the RNAS operation should be reorganised, relocated and reinforced. Sykes was eventually placed in

10.2 Commodore Roger Keyes RN and Colonel Frederick Sykes RFC, in consultation at Kephalos Bay, Imbro © IWM

command of all the air units and concentrated his assets at a new aerodrome on the island of Imbros. A strip was also prepared at Cape Helles and used as a Forward Operating Base for a time, but had to be abandoned as it attracted Turkish shelling. Following the failure of the Suvla Bay landings, to which again the air contributed little, and with a further reinforcement by No 2 Wing[2] and an airship detachment in the anti-submarine role, the RNAS continued their reconnaissance, naval gunfire and artillery spotting, and offensive air operations over the peninsula until the final withdrawal.

However, the RNAS operations at Gallipoli were hampered by factors both human and natural which limited their effectiveness. Although they provided much valuable information regarding terrain and better mapping, not all of it was timely. Co-operation with both artillery and ships was sporadically successful, but hampered by the terrain, lack of trained observers, and the technological limitations of the aircraft, with the gunners complaining that low aircraft endurance meant they were apt to depart 'home for tea'. In addition, ten different types of aircraft with nine different engines at the end of a long supply chain was a logistical and engineering nightmare, added to which the combination of sun, wind and sand, and later winter weather, were severely inimical to technologically limited aircraft, many of which were anyway ill-suited to the types of operations they undertook. Sykes, an RFC man, had also been given an RN commission and placed over established RNAS officers, including the original air commander, the brave but limited C R Samson. This led to friction, which, when coupled with the Admiralty's lukewarm attitude both to the RNAS and the land operation, further undermined the air effort. Sykes was commendably committed to making his air effort 'joint', but given his limited resources, and the inter-service division above his head, he was frequently trying to reconcile the irreconcilable.

The RNAS did achieve some success in disrupting Turkish seaborne communications across the narrows through directing naval gunfire and bombing attacks on the ports on either side, including Gallipoli, Maidos, Ak Bashi Liman, Kilia Liman and Chanak. This forced the Turks to limit activity in the ports to night-time and eventually to rely on the much longer land route, involving rail and road communications totalling in excess of 250 miles. Aside from this success, however, offensive aerial interventions were not notably successful or effective. Bulgarian success against the Serbs meanwhile also opened up the Berlin-Constantinople rail link, and the naval airmen flew a number of ineffective long-range (for the aircraft of the time) sorties to try to take out a vulnerable bridge on the railway, during one of which Commander Richard Bell-Davies undertook what might be considered the first combat air rescue, when he landed his single-seat aircraft alongside that of a downed fellow pilot under fire from Turkish troops, and successfully took-off again, bearing his comrade safely away, Bell-Davies was awarded the Victoria Cross. The RNAS's final and important contribution to the campaign was its success in preventing Turkish or German reconnaissance aircraft from detecting the preparation and execution of the evacuations first from Suvla and subsequently the entire peninsula. This they achieved despite an increasing, and increasingly effective, German air presence at the end of the campaign.

As well as the Bell-Davies episode, other notable aerial 'firsts' at Gallipoli also included the first attempt at co-operation between aircraft and a submarine, which unfortunately resulted only in the loss of the latter and her commanding officer, and the first attacks by aircraft carrying aerial torpedoes, during which the RNAS sank two vessels and finished off a third already crippled by an RN submarine.

German South West Africa

When operations by the Union Expeditionary Force against German South-West Africa commenced in September 1914 no supporting air element was available. Several South African

10.3 A Short 827 seaplane, spotting for HMS *Severn*, shortly after landing behind Gala Island in the Rufiji Delta, German East Africa, 11 June 1917. The seaplane is being secured to the ship. Shortly after this photograph was taken, a German 105mm gun opened fire and drove the *Severn* away from its position © IWM

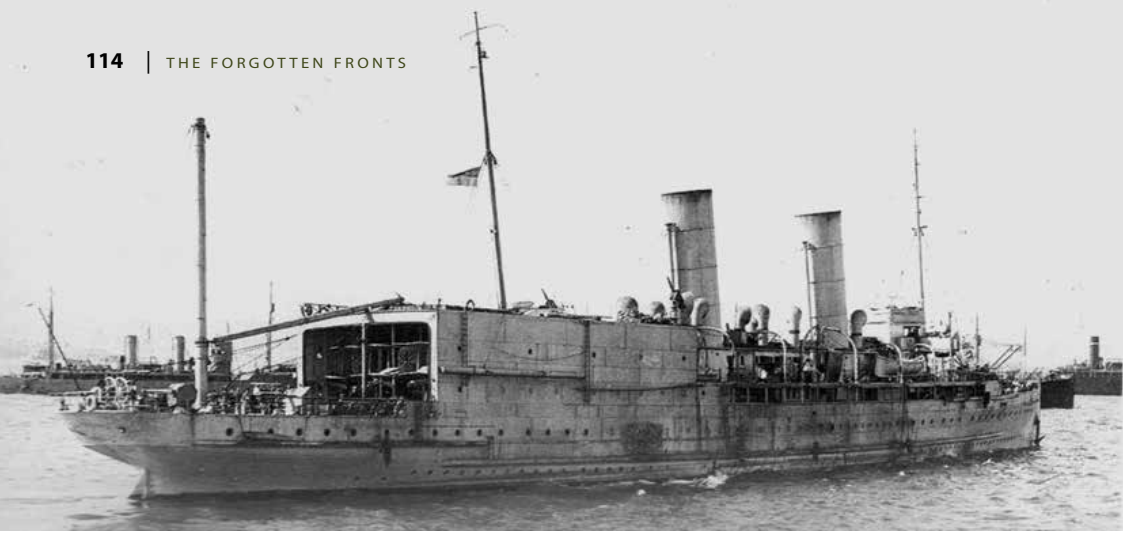
officers were training in the UK and they were intended to be the nucleus of the South African Aviation Corps which had been formed shortly before the War. In November the most senior officer amongst them, Captain G P Wallace, was summoned back to South Africa and charged with setting up an air support unit for the South-West Africa campaign. Meanwhile the Union forces under Generals Smuts and Botha had achieved considerable success and it was only in the final stages of the campaign that aircraft played any part. Several aircraft had been shipped to Walvis Bay, including metal framed Henri Farmans considered more suitable to the climatic conditions, but as they were shipped as deck cargo all but one suffered damage in transit. Replacements were sent and the serviceable aircraft were utilised to conduct reconnaissance ahead of General Botha's columns, tracking the German retreat prior to their final surrender in July. The air element's reconnaissance were undoubtedly useful, but the principal benefit was to confirm that the metal-framed Farmans were better-suited to operations in hot climates than wooden-framed aircraft which experienced problems with warping of the frames. Many of the air personnel were then transferred across the continent to participate in the campaign in East Africa.

The Campaign in East Africa

The preliminary curtain-raiser to the extended campaign against General von Lettow-Vorbeck, which ranged across hundreds of miles of East Africa for much of 1916 and 1917, was the sinking of the German light cruiser SMS *Konigsberg*, which had 'holed-up' in the difficult waters of the Rufiji Delta. After protracted operations she was eventually located by RNAS aircraft and sunk in July 1915 by air-directed gunfire from the monitors HMS *Severn* and HMS *Mersey*.

Operations to clear von Lettow-Vorbeck's German troops and their native levies from East Africa then commenced in earnest, initially under the command of Lieutenant General Jan Christian Smuts. Smuts deployed his forces initially from Mombasa, with some under the South African General Deventer operating further westwards into the interior, a more central column under his own command, and a further force deploying along the coastal route. These inland columns moved initially west and then southwards and a number of sharp actions with von Lettow-Vorbeck followed with the latter manoeuvring with some skill to keep one step ahead of his pursuers. In addition a third force under Brigadier-General Northey advanced northwards from Nyasaland. Deventer's column was supported by aircraft of Number 7 Squadron RNAS whilst Smuts had under his command Number 26 (South African) Squadron of the RFC, which included many of the initial contingent of UK-trained South African airmen, some of whom had participated briefly in the South-West Africa campaign. The principal activity of these aircraft was to provide a reconnaissance capability for locating the enemy forces in the vast expanses of the African interior, and to reconnoitre enemy positions, not least to establish whether they were occupied, as von Lettow-Vorbeck was a past master at fading away with his forces as the British prepared to attack.

Reconnaissance was also made more difficult by the nature of the country which favoured concealment by those who did not wish to be observed. The aircraft were also used to provide advanced information on the terrain and topography, the presence of water supplies, and the condition of bridges, as well as identifying tracks ahead of the columns, allowing the Staff to plan the best route across countryside which was poorly mapped. The aircraft also engaged in occasional bombing raids when the German forces chose to occupy positions or camps within range of their aircraft and these did, certainly initially, have an effect on the morale of the native Askari levies in German service, who regarded aircraft as supernatural phenomena proving the divine influence of the British Empire forces.



10.4 The stern of HMS *Ben-my-Chree* showing the Aircraft Hangars, circa 1915 © IWM

The RNAS and RFC squadrons had to advance in tandem with the ground forces, building landing grounds as they went and hauling much of their equipment with them. As they were short of transport much of what they did have was overloaded and suffered from worn tyres and the battering it received from moving across country or on ill-defined tracks. The wear and tear on aircraft was also a major problem in the hot and dusty conditions interspersed with the monsoon. As they were frequently operating from landing grounds at high altitude the lack of engine power could also prove problematic for the pilots. In addition, some of the aircraft shipped from the UK had no, or incorrect, propellers, and faulty material meant only four out of eight Henri Farmans sent could be made serviceable, one of which crashed soon afterwards. The excessive heat also affected the bombs, many of which failed to explode and the problem was traced to the primers which had deteriorated to the extent that a check in December 1916 revealed that only 200 of 1600 bombs held in the Aircraft Park were serviceable. An RFC air mechanic experimented with chemicals and devised a method of restoring the primers and, working alone, returned 500 bombs to useable condition but was tragically killed in an explosion in January 1917.

Supplies, including petrol, often had to be hauled across long distances, and native porters, tired of hauling eight gallon drums over the mountains, slyly emptied much of the contents, refilling the drums with water when nearing their destination. Pilots making not infrequent forced landings also faced natural hazards: one spent the night being eyed by hungry lions, another's four day adventure included a night imprisoned in a tree with a leopard below, a narrow shave with a crocodile while swimming a river, and having most of his drying clothes stolen by baboons. A similar four day ordeal for the crew of a seaplane forced down in the Rufiji, including building a makeshift raft, ended tragically with the death of the Flag Commander, the Hon R O B Bridgeman, who drowned, though his pilot survived as a PoW. Sickness was also a major problem, such that of 346 NCOs and men on 26 Squadron's strength in the year April 1916 to April 1917 eight had died, 180 had been medically discharged, and thirty-three ended the year in hospital.

Bridgeman had been participating in one of the many reconnaissance operations conducted along the coastline by RNAS seaplanes of No 8 Squadron RNAS, which operated from three support vessels, including the *Manica* of Dardanelles fame. These provided much valuable support including photographs of proposed landing areas and other points of interest. In January 1917, however, the Admiralty ordered No 7 Squadron RNAS to withdraw from the interior and its remaining five BE2c aircraft and stores were transferred to 26 Squadron RFC. As the year progressed detachments from 26 Squadron became every more widely scattered as they assisted in the pursuit of elusive German columns. Brigadier-General Northey's forces were supported by one, later two, BE2s of A Flight, whose crews contrived to refuel the aircraft in the air using petrol cans and rubber tubing, perhaps the first example of an aircraft using in-flight refuelling. Although the ancient and overworked aircraft finally gave up the ghost in October, they were instrumental in assisting Northey finally to run a German column of some 4,700 troops to ground in late November.

Meanwhile, both RFC and RNAS aircraft supported the final drive from Kilwa and Lindi against von Lettow-Vorbeck's much depleted 'main body'. Although the latter was never captured most of his force was ultimately destroyed or dispersed. In addition to performing all the reconnaissance, bombing and survey roles previously employed, the aircraft in this final phase provided both a spotting capability for artillery and naval gunfire, and frequently a vitally important communications, and sometimes sole, link between the staff and the separate troop columns. It is remarkable how the myriad human, meteorological, topographical, technical, logistical and operational difficulties facing the airmen in this theatre were successfully overcome through fortitude, persistence, ingenuity and guile, despite the manifest inadequacies of their resources and their increasingly ancient and battered aircraft.

The Middle East Senussi and Darfur Campaigns 1915-1917

With the winding down of the Gallipoli operations at the close of 1915 attention switched back to Egypt. Here RFC reinforcements arrived at the end of 1915 in the shape of Number 5 Wing, under Lieutenant Colonel Geoffrey Salmond, and consisting of 14 and 17 Squadrons and 'X' Aircraft Park. At about the same time a twin threat developed to the British position in Egypt when both the Senussi Arabs in the Libyan Western Desert, and Ali Dinar the Sultan of Darfur in the Sudan, became increasingly aggressive and hostile. Flights of both14 and 17 Squadrons, and latterly 1 Squadron Australian Flying Corps, were deployed against the Senussi in 1916 to locate and track hostile forces and establish their presence, particularly in the all-important oases, or reconnoitre their positions for ground and occasionally naval forces. HMS *Ben-my-Chree's* seaplanes also co-operated in operations around Sollum. Some of the oases reconnaissance were conducted up to 200 miles from the base aerodromes, utilising advanced landing grounds often supplied by camel, and at least two airmen died of thirst when they force-landed in the desert.

The Senussi threat was fairly rapidly nullified by mid-year before their eventual defeat in 1917. The deployment of air assets in the Sudan was far less easy, as it involved moving 'C'Flight of 17 Squadron1700 miles by sea and rail from Suez to Rahad and then a further 350 miles by camel and lorry to the front. When these formidable logistical challenges had been overcome the four deployed BE2c aircraft again proved invaluable in locating both the enemy and sources of water, and in making bomb and machine gun attacks. The last of these attacks by Lieutenant J C Slessor, a future Chief of Air Staff, near El Fasher on 23 May 1916 scattered Ali Dinar's main force and the RFC detachment was withdrawn back to Egypt. The Sultan was pursued and eventually killed in November near Jebel Juba. Without the contribution of fairly small air elements these two campaigns would have required a far greater commitment of troops and both would in all likelihood have been more protracted: unwelcome distractions though they were, they did not ultimately develop into the major diversions they might so easily have become.

Mesopotamia 1915-1918

The deployment of a Brigade from the Indian Army to protect the oil refinery at Fao in what is now southern Iraq initially included no air element, but when the commitment increased to an army corps, Force D, under General Sir John Nixon in April 1915, his staff included Captain Broke-Smith of the RFC. The RFC element in India had been denuded at the start of the War when personnel and aircraft were deployed to Egypt. The Viceroy therefore requested Dominion Governments for help to provide an aviation detachment for service in the 'Tigris Valley'. Australia responded by providing four pilots, and a cadre of mechanics, who were exceptionally well-equipped with tools, motor transport which provided custom built workshops and even a mule. The Australian half flight lacked only one thing - aircraft. These were provided by the Indian Government in the form of two fairly venerable Maurice Farman with 70hp engines and lacking armament and stores. The Indian Army also provided the Flight's commander, Major Reilly, whilst New Zealand sent its only trained pilot. Broke-Smith scraped together fifteen mechanics from British and Indian units. This multi-national conglomerate was to work surprisingly well together. Broke defined the air element's role as providing tactical and strategic reconnaissance, artillery spotting, and communication duties between troop columns.

During the initial successful advances by Major-General Townshends' 6th Division up the Tigris to Amara the tiny air element corrected Force D's inadequate maps and provided very valuable information on Turkish dispositions, their defensive positions, and their subsequent retreat. Information on the latter considerably emboldened Townshend in his headlong pursuit of the Turks. An aerial reconnaissance on 14 June provided Townshend with a sketch map of the Turkish positions at Es Sinn, near Kut al Amara, some 120 miles upstream. Townshend was to use this map in his September assault on Kut. Meanwhile the exiguous air resources available to Force D meant that the Farmans were withdrawn back to Basra when General Nixon decided to push Major-General Gorringe's 12th Division along the *Euphrhates* to take Nasiriyeh. In the initial stages of this advance the overworked and tired old Farmans were unserviceable and it is noticeable that without air support Gorringe's troops struggled to identify the Turkish positions and batteries, and consequently suffered heavy casualties until the General postponed further attacks to await reinforcement 'especially aeroplanes.' These duly arrived in the form of two Caudron biplanes powered by Gnome air-cooled rotaries, which proved unreliable in the fierce climate of southern Iraq. The Caudrons nevertheless provided Gorringe with the reconnaissance capability he needed to take the Nasiriyeh position. The unreliability of the Gnome engines meant both aircraft force-landed on the return flight to Basra and local Arabs killed the crew of one and wrecked the aircraft, thus reducing the flight's strength by a third. The other Caudron would suffer a similar fate behind Turkish lines in September and its crew made PoW.

In August the War Office decided to assume responsibility for the air unit in Iraq from the Indian Government, and it sent four Martinsyde S1s as reinforcements. Two RNAS seaplanes were also sent from East Africa. The RFC/RNAS element flew daily sorties,

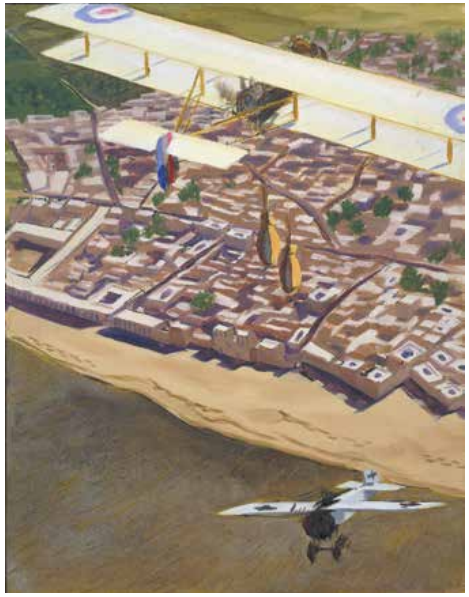
10.5 A Type aerial camera fixed to a vertical mount aft of the cockpit of a Caudron G.3 C945 of the Royal Flying Corps, 1915 © IWM

dropping bombs and leaflets and using a hand held camera and visual reconnaissance to provide Townshend's staff with material to plan an assault on the Es Sinn position. The photos could not be accurately scaled against maps and thus only gave a general layout for the Turkish trenches. Attempts at artillery co-operation using the wireless-equipped seaplanes proved largely ineffective. Nevertheless, Townshend's troops finally took the position on 29 September 1915 and pursued the Turks towards Baghdad. In early October Reilly flew a reconnaissance which identified strong Turkish forces digging in at Ctesiphon and, on the basis of this intelligence coupled with the exhaustion of his troops and his increasingly perilous logistics, Townshend recommended to Nixon that he stop and retire to Kut. The latter, however, convinced the Turks were a weak and demoralised force, ordered Townshend to continue.

Meanwhile, the RFC was reinforced with four BE2c aircraft and further ground crews and was re-designated 30 Squadron. Further RFC reports confused the issue because they were conducted from altitude and by inexperienced observers and did not spot the considerable Turkish reinforcements moving into position around Ctesiphon. Ill-luck then intervened. Two sorties did spot the reinforcements, but the first force-landed behind the Turkish lines, and Reilly, flying the second, and seeing troop movements, dropped to 1000' to confirm the sighting but was shot down and captured. Townshend thus remained ignorant of the fact that he faced a force three times greater than intelligence suggested. In the subsequent battle his force suffered 42 per cent casualties and he withdrew to Kut.

With the exception of four pilots who escaped by air, most of the 30 Squadron element was besieged in Kut with Townshend, including two unserviceable BE2cs and a Martinsyde as well as stores; in addition the 30 Squadron barge with much equipment and stores was captured. This had a disastrous effect on operations. By January 1916 the Squadron possessed just one serviceable aircraft. The arrival of a Turko-German Squadron with ten aircraft meant air superiority passed to the enemy. Despite a brave attempt to supply Kut from the air using crude parachutes improvised by an Australian mechanic, the RFC could not supply the 5000lbs of stores required by the besieged troops every day, only achieving a maximum of 3550lbs. In all 140 food-dropping sorties were flown in the last two weeks of April, dropping 19000lbs of food. A 70lb millstone was also successfully parachuted into the garrison! The first ever attempt to supply troops from the air was thus in the event little more than a brave if ultimately futile gesture, though it did point the way to the future, and portended more successful small-scale tactical operations later on the Western Front. Forty-four RFC men surrendered in Kut and few survived their subsequent captivity.

The later development of the campaign in Mesopotamia followed similar lines. No 30 Squadron was strongly reinforced subsequently, though not always with up to date aircraft. It suffered at times when more modern German aircraft such as Halberstadts were deployed but did not again sink to the nadir of early 1916. During General Maude's 1917 offensives along the Tigris the Squadron again proved its worth in conducting reconnaissance and proved adept at harassing the Turkish forces as they retreated northwards. They also photographed



10.6 British Maurice Farman attacked by a German Fokker while dropping sacks of corn on Kut-el-Amara during the Siege of 1916 Sydney Carline © IWM

hundreds of miles of territory to improve the Army's mapping of Iraq. Maude instigated an operational pause after capturing Baghdad and this lasted until early 1918. An attempt to reinforce the RFC in August 1917 proved disastrous as the deployment of 63 Squadron direct from Northumberland resulted in wholesale sickness amongst the officers and men rendering the squadron ineffective. The RFC continued to operate in close co-operation with the Army during the later operations in Iraq right up to the Armistice of Mudros.

The principal enemies of the air services throughout the operations in Mesopotamia were those of nature, whether heat, sand, flies or rain. Usually forced to operate with obsolete or obsolescent, indeed sometimes downright ancient, aircraft especially in the early years, the air and ground crews performed very creditably. Although the German air service did appear in the theatre in 1916 and thereafter occasionally scored successes in the air against the RFC, the unreliability of the latter's aircraft engines was a greater menace and caused more losses of aircraft and aircrew. Within a month of their arrival in theatre the RFC had made themselves an integral part of the generals' planning, as evinced by Gorringe's refusal to move on Nasiriyeh until he had air support. In these early operations the contingent from the Australian Flying Corps had provided much of the backbone of the air operation.

Egypt, Sinai and Palestine 1916-1918

The Australians, in the form of Number 1 Squadron Australian Flying Corps, also contributed significantly to operations in Egypt and Sinai in 1916, although the fact that the unit arrived at Suez

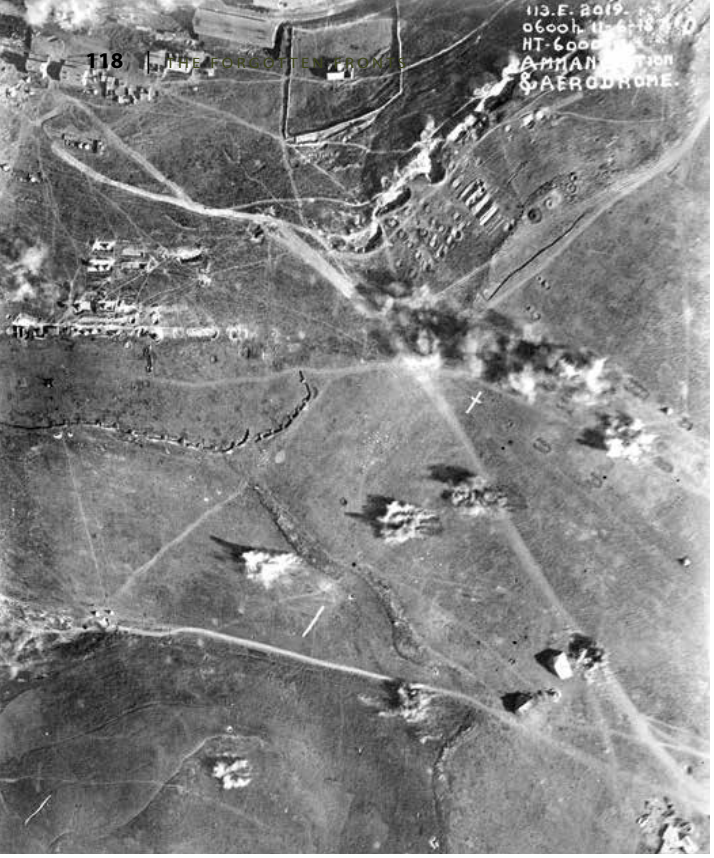
10.7 Halberstadt CL IV of National Museum of the United States Air Force collection © USAF

in April without any aircraft, tools, or equipment is indicative of the strain which the entire British Empire air effort was under at the time. 1 Squadron AFC joined 14 and 17 Squadrons in 5 Wing. Troops withdrawn from Gallipoli and reinforcements from the UK were sent to Egypt and the defences of the Suez Canal were pushed forward into Sinai. In the early months of 1916 5 Wing concentrated on reconnaissance, occasionally as much as 100 miles east of the Canal, and on photographic survey work. In the spring the arrival of German air units with 150hp Rumplers and single-seat Fokker fighters raised a serious threat to the RFC and forced them to abandon long range reconnaissance sorties around Beersheba, which resulted in at least one successful raid on British outposts in April. Despite the withdrawal of 17 Squadron to Salonika the RFC did detect the Turkish offensive in late July which resulted in the victory at the Battle of Romani.

The RFC in the Middle East was expanding and, in addition to 5 Wing, now included training squadrons, a maintenance depot and logistics units and in consequence an RFC Middle East Brigade was formed to control all RFC units in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Sudan and East Africa. In the latter half of 1916 the British methodically improved their infrastructure in Sinai, pushing the all-important railhead forward and by the end of the year Turkish forces had been expelled or withdrawn from Sinai. During these operations and those that followed in the New Year the RFC conducted extensive reconnaissance operations, and photographed Turkish positions, as well as conducting bombing raids. The actions at Rafah and Magdhaba were supported by RFC wireless parties carried on sleds with the horse artillery which then co-operated with aircraft in directing the guns. However, the frequent moves and light guns of the RHA batteries were not ideal for operating with aircraft, which were better able to direct heavier batteries that remained stationary for long periods and created more conspicuous shell bursts.

Moreover, the RFC squadrons were still largely equipped with BE2 aircraft which were outclassed by the more powerful Rumpler and Halberstadt aircraft of the German air service supporting the Turkish forces. The RAF Official History argues that this was a crucial factor in the British defeat at the first Battle of Gaza in March 1917, when the RFC was unable to prevent German aircraft reconnoitring the British preparations and advance enabling the German commander, Kress von Kressenstein, to take energetic steps to reinforce Gaza and counterattack. The Germans, unlike the RFC, deployed their most modern types in Palestine, and had the RFC followed suit the result of the battle might have been different. We should note, however, that April 1917 was not a happy period for the British air service on the

10.8 Rumpler C.IV as seen in Deutsches Museum, Munchen © Wikimedia, Zandcee



10.9 Vertical photograph taken during a bombing raid on Amman
© RAF Museum

Western Front either. Some modern historians disagree with this assessment but it appears to have some substance.

We should also note that, despite the best efforts of the RFC in conducting photographic survey, with their limited resources they could cover only relatively small areas. Additionally, technical limitations meant they could not produce accurate maps at medium scale and the army was thus compelled to work with highly inaccurate (as much as 2000' height variation between map and terrain) maps at too small a scale to be of tactical use (1:250,000 not the 1:10,000 used in France). This meant that until at least mid-1917 the RFC in Egypt and Palestine had to use a slower and more cumbersome visual correction system for artillery fire than that used in France. As a result the Second Battle of Gaza, which was a more set-piece affair requiring considerable artillery support, went little better than the first.

There was one notable development at Second Gaza, when a signals intelligence (Sigint) station set up at the start of the year to monitor the enemy GHQ at Damascus warned of an imminent cavalry counter-attack which was confirmed by air reconnaissance. An airstrike by 1 Squadron AFC[3] successfully disrupted and dispersed the cavalry.

The six month pause between Second and Third Gaza saw considerable improvement in the RFC organisation and operations. A new technique for mapping without associated ground survey enabled 1 Squadron AFC to produce maps from aerial photographs such that fifty copies of a map at 1:20,000 could be produced and distributed within hours. The army was provided with twenty map sheets covering southern Palestine by October 1917. Two new squadrons, 111 and 115, arrived and enabled a reorganisation along Western Front lines, with a new Wing, Number 40, to act as the Army Wing, whilst 5 Wing became the Corps Wing. A miscellany of improved aircraft types also arrived, including a few Bristol Fighters in late September. For the Third Battle of Gaza in October the RFC had some seventy serviceable aircraft compared to just twenty-one at First Gaza in March. There were also fifty two ground stations with the artillery batteries compared to ten in March.

As the battle developed, the Turkish forces began a general withdrawal from the Gaza position to avoid envelopment and the RFC squadrons were unleashed against them as they retreated. These bombing and strafing attacks caused considerable casualties among the troops but more importantly, as Kress von Kressenstein recognised, panic and confusion. They also severely disrupted the telephone system adding to the disorganisation. This meant that what might have been an orderly retreat effectively became a rout. This also meant that the newly reinforced German air units were forced to abandon their aerodromes leaving behind large amounts of stores and at least fifteen aircraft. However, serviceability in the RFC squadrons also fell away rapidly and despite their losses the Turks withdrew more than eighty per cent of their artillery and transport.

The culmination of the campaign in Palestine a year later at Meggido saw a repeat performance by the RAF[4]. At Meggido, however, it was bombing attacks on major HQs just prior to and in the early stages of the offensive that disrupted telephone communications. General Liman von Sanders complained that he lost contact with subordinate headquarters almost as soon as the offensive opened. Once the breakthrough took place the RAF squadrons once more wreaked havoc on retreating troops again inflicting significant casualties. Whether the Turkish armies by that stage were really capable of re-establishing a line and prolonging their resistance is debatable however. The RAF had identified likely escape routes and instigated planned 'shuttle' attacks against the retreating columns on 19 and 20 September 1918. Most of the RAF bombing and strafing attacks during later stages of the retreat were a much more ad hoc affair and were

10.10 On 18 June 1916, in the course of an organised air raid on El Arish, Captain van Ryneveldt, RFC, had his machine damaged by a bullet which pierced his engine oil-sump, and he had to land on the beach. A BE2c biplane, carrying two officers - Captain S Grant-Dalton, RFC (Pilot) and 2nd. Lieut. Paris (Observer) - came down beside the Martinsyde. The latter was set on fire, as it was unfit to fly, and after many difficulties the three officers succeeded in rising in the BE2c. Captain Dalton flew his heavily-burdened machine a distance of 90 miles back to the aerodrome without mishap. For this exploit he was awarded the DSO. Knighted for a pioneering flight to South Africa in the 1920s Sir Pierre van Rynveldt went on to command the South African Air Force from 1920-33 and then became Chief of the South African General Staff during the Second World War. Grant-Dalton's son flew with Bomber Command in the Second World War and was awarded the DFC and bar - Frank H Mason © IWM

never properly co-ordinated or directed by Allenby's GHQ. Their effect was thus often severe, but localised. They did, however, cause the troops to abandon much of their transport. It was the effect of these demoralising and constant air attacks combined with the bold advances by Allenby's cavalry, not air power alone, which ensured that the Ottoman armies could not stabilise the situation. The suggestion that the RAF had prevented the German air service from identifying the likely axis of the British advance at Meggido also does not accord with surviving German records, which indicate the opposite.

We should also note the activities of the small detachment from 14 Squadron, known subsequently as 'X' Flight, which operated from Aqaba in support of T E Lawrence and the forces of Ibn Saud involved in the Arab Revolt. The aircraft mainly conducted reconnaissance and bombing operations against stations on the Hejaz railway notably at Ma'an and the German air detachment there.

Overall, as on the Western Front, air power was vital to the effective conduct of the combined arms battle in the Middle East in many different ways - aerial survey and mapping; artillery co-operation; defensive and offensive counter-air operations; reconnaissance and intelligence gathering; and offensive strike and close support operations. The effectiveness of the RFC/RAF effort varied at points throughout the campaign but overall it was more effective than the comparable German effort that started in mid-1916. The latter, despite enjoying qualitative superiority for considerable periods, was hamstrung by ineffective logistics and organisational issues. Despite similar shortcomings at times, the RFC generally managed to overcome its often challenging logistical problems by a combination of ingenuity and flexibility. Whilst the inadequacies of the RFC equipment for most of the campaign prior to Third Gaza, together with the challenges of climate and ground, meant it was unable to operate as efficiently as its counterpart on the Western Front, it nevertheless made an invaluable contribution to the ultimate victory. Much of the credit for this belongs to Geoffrey Salmond who during the course of the campaign rose from Lieutenant Colonel commanding 5 Wing, to Major-General commanding the RFC Middle East Brigade.

10.11 The arrival at the 1920 Cairo Conference of Sir Herbert Samuel, H.B.M. High Commissioner, etc. Col. Lawrence, Emir Abdullah, Air Marshal Sir Geoffrey Salmond and Sir Wyndham Deedes © Eric & Edith Matson Photograph Collection - US LoC

Salonika

The initial British troop deployments in Macedonia did not include associated air units. Some reconnaissance was undertaken by seaplanes from the carrier HMS *Ark Royal* at Mudros and others were flown by French aircraft with British observers. However, following the landing of the reconstituted Serbian Army at Salonika in May 1916 the French aircraft were redeployed to assist the Serbs and Lieutenant General Milne requested the deployment of two RFC squadrons. By September the RFC had a Wing of two squadrons (17 and 47 Squadrons, the former withdrawn from Egypt), a balloon section and an aircraft park in place, tasked with reconnaissance, artillery co-operation and bombing. The arrival in early 1917 of Kampfgeschwader 1 equipped with bomber aircraft with considerably better performance than the BE2s and BE12s of the RFC posed a serious threat.

To counter this move the RFC formed a composite squadron utilising the BE12s from both squadrons and two DH2s from 47 Squadron. Although all were inferior to the escorting German Halberstadt fighters, and had little or no margin even over the AEG and Frederichshafen bombers they achieved some limited success. Meanwhile in response to appeals from Milne the RNAS had sent four Sopwith 11/2 Strutters and a Sopwith Triplane and later sent an entire Sopwith squadron, 'F' Squadron. The RNAS squadron was badly affected by an accident when a number of bombed-up aircraft in a hangar were destroyed by an explosion and subsequent fire. For most of 1917 the RFC struggled with its inadequate resources and aircraft, both to cover the required range of tasks along the length of the British front, and to counter the German air effort. Some more capable SE5a aircraft were despatched from the UK, arriving in December 1917, but not until February 1918 did each of the two squadrons have as many a four aircraft. These few SE5s did, however, interrupt the previously serene and untroubled progress of German reconnaissance sorties.

On 1 April 1918, the formation of the RAF was marked in Macedonia by the formation of No 150 Squadron which took over the SE5a's of 17 and 47 Squadrons, allowing the latter to become Corps squadrons focussed on the co-operative roles. A third flight of Sopwith Camels was also added to 150 Squadron, and 17 and 47 Squadrons were re-equipped gradually with Armstrong Whitworth FK8s and the more capable De Havilland DH9[5]. These more modern aircraft participated in the final Allied offensive in September 1918 which forced the Bulgarians back from the Doiran-Vardar defensive line. As at Meggido the RAF attacked the retreating Bulgarian troops, with bombs and machine gun fire, concentrating on the narrow valleys and defiles. The 47 Squadron intelligence officer, who inspected one route, reported 300 transport wagons destroyed with their horses and oxen dead, and 700 corpses awaiting burial at the local hospital. The morale of the Bulgarians troops was fatally undermined and plenipotentiaries signed the document which brought hostilities to a close on 30 September 1918.

The Caucasus and Dunsterforce

The operations of 'Dunsterforce' in the Caucasus were also vigorously supported by small but effective air elements. Martynside aircraft of 'B' Flight of 72 Squadron were sent to Kazvin 100 miles north west of Teheran. From here they supported British and Russian detachments moving towards Enzeli and Baku on the Caspian Sea, the former being the centre of the Caucasus oil industry. These few RAF aircraft were extremely effective first in defeating local tribesmen sympathetic to the Turks and then in suppressing their further spasmodic hostility. This included supporting a small British detachment at Resht which was attacked by 2500 tribesmen, and continuing attacks on the latter for ten days after they withdrew from the town, and this finally induced their leader to sign an agreement with the British.

Dunsterforce then sent troops and two aircraft to Baku in August 1918 to co-operate with local Caucasian authorities in preventing the Turks from seizing the town and its oil. Fierce fighting ensued during which the two aircraft made innumerable attacks on the Turkish forces before their aircraft were rendered unserviceable by the number of hits they had sustained from small arms fire. The RAF contingent was evacuated from Baku with the survivors of Dunsterforce in September. Further fighting continued in northern Persia and Azerbaijan. Here the remnants of the 72 Squadron detachment and three RE8s from 30 Squadron conducted reconnaissance, dropped propaganda leaflets, and strafed and bombed Turkish troops. In the opinion of Major General Thomson, who had succeeded to the command of Dunsterforce, this activity caused all the locally employed drivers and transport to abandon the Turks, and reduced their two Divisions south of Tabriz to 'chaos'.

The Italian Front 1917-1918

The emergency deployment of British Army divisions and accompanying RFC elements to Italy after the disaster which befell the Italians at Caporetto meant several RFC squadrons appeared on the new front. As the original army commitment rapidly expanded so did the RFC's, from an initial two squadrons to an eventual six, along with an aircraft park, a Brigade and two Wing HQs, and a balloon wing. The first squadrons to arrive were No 28 flying Camels, and No 34 flying RE8s and they were joined soon after by two further Camel squadrons [45 and 66] and a further RE8 squadron [No 42]. The British squadrons settled into a normal routine with the two XIV Corps squadrons conducting reconnaissance and photographic sorties, interspersed with bombing attacks on the Austro-German air forces. A retaliatory sortie by the Austrian airmen on Boxing Day 1917 had an element of farce, since the attack had been ordered early on the 26th but many of the pilots had been celebrating Christmas and only just gone to bed. At least six machines landed on the British side of the lines, one pilot was captured asleep in his machine which was low on fuel, and several of the others were reported as being 'not quite sober'. The Camels sought to establish air superiority both in the air and by attacking Austrian airfields. By the early spring both German and British units were being transferred back to the Western Front and the RFC Brigade HQ and one of the Wing HQs were also sent back to France along with 42 Squadron. However, a flight of Bristol Fighters, known as Z Flight was sent from Britain and undertook the longer range reconnaissance sorties - the flight eventually became No 139 Squadron.

10.12 British Intelligence Officer uses a stereoscopic viewer to interpret aerial reconnaissance photographs on the Italian Front © IWM

When the Austrian offensive in June 1918 established bridgeheads over the Piave the Camels were used to attack the pontoon bridges and some Austrian units were caught in the act of embarking in boats. The RAF attacks imposed some delay on the Austrian advance, which gave some breathing space for the Italians to organise their counter-attacks, but bad weather was also an important factor in compelling the Austrians to withdraw back across the river. In later Italian offensive operations the RE8 Squadrons, flying with Italian observers, assisted the Italian artillery. In the final Vittorio Veneto offensive the RAF XIV Corps squadrons moved to new airfields but limited their operations over the new sector of line to avoid arousing suspicion and thus had to photograph the entire British XIV Corps front in one day and produce and distribute 5000 prints overnight. As the offensive opened the Camels attacked the Austrian observation balloons, as well as conducting contact patrols and bombing sorties, and attacking the retreating Austrian columns up to the Armistice of 4th November during which they dropped 20,000lbs of bombs and expended 51,000 rounds of machine gun ammunition.

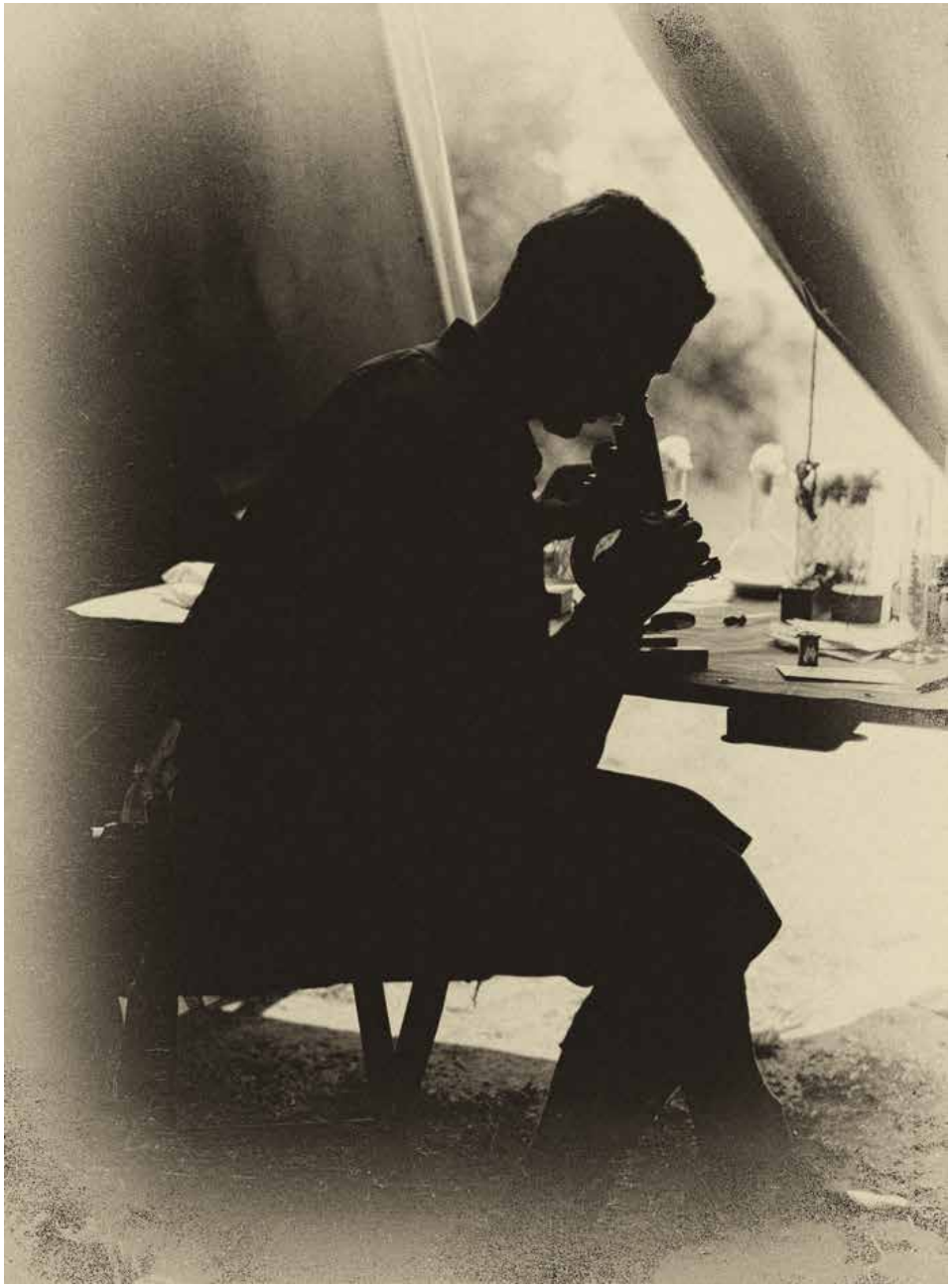
Conclusion

In all the major campaigns which involved British Empire forces in Africa, the Mediterranean and the Middle East commanders came to recognise the important contribution of the Air Services to the combined arms battle. Although often wary initially, the value of aircraft in the reconnaissance and artillery co-operation roles was evident from the outset, but developments in the less-heralded and often tedious mapping and survey work were often as significant. The value of direct air attack increased as the aircraft and technology improved, such that by 1917-18 attacks on important headquarters prior to or during offensives could have a significant impact, as did attacks on troops, most particularly when they had been forced out of defensive positions and were withdrawing, where the psychological effect of strafing and bombing on already demoralised men could turn retreat into rout. The latter could perhaps have been better focussed and directed on occasion by higher Army headquarters. A criticism which is perhaps true in the wider sense that a properly integrated air plan for an operation was not always put in place, with the result that the air effort could be dissipated across the army rather than being focussed at points where it could achieve maximum effect.

The reliance of air on effective and efficient logistics is highlighted at a number of points above and generally the air services, often by dint of improvisation, met the challenge. This contrasts markedly with German failure to address air logistics which, despite long periods of technological superiority which should have ensured air superiority, rendered the German effort overall far less effective.

Endnotes

1. From 1919 to 1922, Sykes was the Controller of Civil Aviation, and Chief of the Air Staff from 13 April 1918 to 1 Jan 1919.
2. RNAS Squadrons, including No 3, were renamed Wings in August 1915.
3. Number 1 Squadron Australian Flying Corps had been renumbered 67 (Australian) Squadron in late 1916 but to avoid confusion it is referred to here throughout by its original title.
4. On 1 April 1918 the RAF was formed from the amalgamation of the RFC and the RNAS - Ed.
5. Even the Armstrong Whitworth could only carry out bombing sorties at any distance by flying as a single-seater without the observer.



11.1 A Field Bacteriologist Examining Specimens with a Microscope, Salonika, 1916 © IWM

11. Environmental Factors - Medicine and Hygiene in the British Army in the Forgotten Fronts[1]

Dr Michael Tyquin

Introduction

From a medical perspective the forgotten fronts presented different challenges to the better known operational theatres of World War One. In some instances huge distances, rugged terrain, and extreme environmental conditions set these fronts apart from France and Belgium.

Here, medical technology generally took a back seat to sound field hygiene and early preventative measures. Science and soldiers struggled to understand the mechanism of heat injuries. Other challenges were water-borne diseases and malaria. Malaria, a hazard common to all the forgotten fronts, was the main health threat to deployed forces. The effectiveness of malaria eradication and control always depended on individual commanders, terrain, the available medical personnel and sanitation personnel and equipment. On some fronts venereal disease was to prove an ongoing issue.

Everywhere the type of campaign shaped the medical response. Like their arms corps brethren the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) and the wider health services had to grapple with issues regarding leadership, morale, intelligence, allies, doctrine and the physical campaign environment.[2] Planning for the conservation of manpower and soldiers' health was often an after-thought, if considered at all. Not infrequently suitable equipment was lacking as were the trained personnel to operate it.

The importance of the relationship between medical staff and combatant commanders in the field cannot be under-estimated. This varied from good (Allenby in Palestine) to bad (Hamilton in the Dardanelles and Townsend in Mesopotamia). Timely and consultative health planning and effective casualty evacuation were key elements of effective war fighting on these fronts. The importance of hygiene and sanitation is obvious from the data provided in the tables. They show the extent to which operational effectiveness was eroded by non-battle casualties

Despite setbacks the effort of the British Army's medical services in all these fronts enabled the war to be prosecuted for much longer and with less cost than would otherwise have been the case. Some of the forgotten fronts were more problematic than others, as explained in this chapter.

11.2 British troops taking their daily dose of quinine, July 1916 © IWM

The Mediterranean Expeditionary Force during the Dardanelles Campaign

The three main challenges the medical services faced came with problems associated with the landings at Cape Helles in April and Suvla Bay in August 1915 and the offensive launched in the same month. The outstanding features of the medical environment were: lack of planning and liaison with GHQ, confused maritime evacuation; lack of water and high casualty rates among RAMC personnel. Sir Ian Hamilton's belief that he could effect a rapid advance across the peninsular never left him. Consequently many of the medical arrangements took on a persistent ad hoc character - to the detriment of sick and wounded. The fact that this was a highly complex amphibious assault should have called for the most detailed logistics planning. This did not occur.

Commentary

On this front the expedition commander played a key role in how health issues were addressed for most of 1915. This, together with an uninterested GHQ, stymied liaison with his medical advisors. Their absence during critical planning conferences and a reconnaissance in March contributed to the ensuing medical debacles. A determined and well directed enemy defence (most tellingly artillery support) did not help matters.

The peninsular had long been home to endemic diseases such as dysentery and malaria. More through luck than planning the latter was never an issue for British troops here. However gastro-intestinal diseases wrought havoc, hastened by poor sanitation, a fly plague, deficient diet and a lack of clean water. Unlike that of the neighbouring French Expeditionary Force, the ration was bland and monotonous.

It did not help that the force had received no 'sanitary instruction and it was poorly equipped with sanitary apparatus.'[3] The lack of timber, corrugated iron, fly and mosquito netting made it difficult to establish effective sanitation.

An official inquiry was launched in 1916 as a result of scandalous stories about casualty evacuation from Gallipoli. Indeed maritime evacuation is a central part of the whole medical story on this front. The evacuation system from the peninsula was complicated because of divided responsibilities between the army and the Royal Navy. Long distances (it was four-five days' steaming from the island of Lemnos (the forward base for the campaign) to Egypt) complicated these arrangements and there was an acute shortage of suitable shipping for most of 1915. There was a constant fight for more resources of all kinds from the War Office whose main effort remained the Western Front.

The climate also affected the health of the troops. At first they were subjected to hot wet weather in which flies bred in plague proportions. Then, from November severe weather added to the general misery, inflicting thousands of cases of frostbite, while 280 soldiers either died from exposure or were drowned in their trenches.

The breakdown of the evacuation system and delays in reaching more definitive care on hospital ships contributed to high mortality rates among the wounded in April and August. Casualties from the Dardanelles overwhelmed medical facilities in Egypt and Malta. By winter tented medical units on the nearby islands of Imbros and Lemnos required rapid reinforcement and re-supply if they were to remain effective. The deteriorating weather threatened not only maritime casualty evacuation, but the supply of rations, water and medical stores.

On the positive side the establishment of rest camps in July (later for ANZAC troops) helped restore the health of troops who had been on Helles since April. These respite camps were set up on the nearby island of Imbros - but it was too little too late.

Table 11.1 Sphere of Action

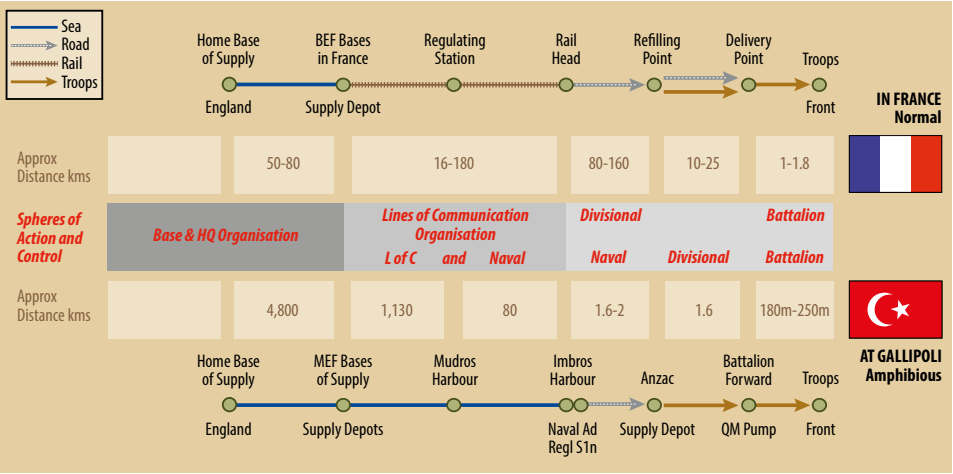


Table 11.2 British casualties in the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force*

	Officers	Other Ranks	Total
Battle Casualties	2780	66046	68826
Non-battle Casualties	6014	139140	145154
Total	**8794**	**205186**	**213980**
Battle Casualties			
KIA	808	10426	11234
Died of Wounds (DOW) pre hospital admission	60	2204	2264
Died of Wounds in hospital	151	2931	3082
Missing	244	6977	7221
POW	19	285	304
Wounded (less DOW in hospital)	1498	43223	44721
Non-battle Casualties			
Died of Disease in hospital	60	1821	1861
Died of Injury in hospital	5	222	227
Sick or injured (less DOD)	5949	137097	143046
Total	8794	205186	213980

*Excludes Australian and New Zealand troops

Unusually among the forgotten fronts there were high casualty numbers among the RAMC, especially during the landings, and later from diseases and artillery fire. Battalion medical officers had to be replaced from already stretched field ambulances and it was some time before the depleted ranks of the latter could be reinforced. Consequently those medical units were always short-handed, more so than in any other theatre.

Despite better planning, medical support to the August Offensive (especially at Suvla Bay in the north) was blighted by many of the same issues seen at the April landing. There were insufficient hospital ships and small boats, a lack of effective communications and a shortage of stretchers. 'The nomination of sufficient officers both to sort casualties and to direct them

11.3 Sick soldiers boarding a motor lighter for transmission to a hospital ship at Mudros Harbour. Note hospital ship and the airship, known as the submarine catcher or the Silver Baby in the background © IWM

11.4 camel train moving in rain over the Hill of Judea, 1916. The camels are fitted with covered stretchers (cacolets) carrying wounded. James McBey © IWM

to shore or ship had at least been recognised and this was a definite improvement.'[4]

By November the force was in no fit state to maintain a robust defence let alone launch an offensive. Troops here were tired, stricken with disease and, in some instances, undernourished.

The British Forces in Egypt and Palestine

The underlying success of the health effort here was the support it received from the highest quarters. 'One of the unique features of the Palestine campaign was the full cooperation received by the medical services from the commanding and staff officers at all levels and at all times [later, no doubt due to leadership of General Sir Edmund Allenby].'[5] During the war the fighting went from a largely stationary, garrison type operation to a highly mobile one conducted over different terrain in all seasons, supported by lines of communication medical units. This was arguably the only forgotten front in which venereal disease was a significant problem. For example in 1916 the average annual rate of venereal disease in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force was 12 per cent (although in some units it was as high as 25 percent).[6]

It helped that British forces had been garrisoned in Egypt for decades and the health threats were well known and managed. However the highly mobile operations that characterised the fighting in Palestine and Syria from 1917 provided new challenges, not least the change in terrain and climate. There was a general (and probably inevitable) failure in malaria control and, from late 1916 there were some instances of a collapse of medical organisation.

Commentary

Under a Director of Medical Services, the medical administration for this campaign was divided into:

- Alexandria and the western desert (and west to the frontier of Tripoli)
- The Delta District (Cairo and all Egypt west of the Suez Canal)
- Palestine Lines of Communications (an extraordinarily long one which extended from Kantara to El Arish, then to Gaza, Jerusalem and later Aleppo)

Each of these administrative areas had its own medical directors who supervised hospitals, field ambulances and smaller medical units. In addition there were medical staff and personnel within all formations and units.

War on this front moved from largely defensive operations in 1915 to a highly mobile type of fighting over different terrain (and climate) from 1916. This challenged the doctrine of the day: long lines of communication, water supply, medical support and evacuation; and hospital accommodation. It also resulted in innovations such as sand sleighs for quickly removing casualties from the firing line.

Some problems were of the force's own making. For example during the Battle of Romani in August 1916 there was a shortage of stretchers for horsed units - both British cavalry and Anzac Light Horse Brigades. Unfortunately some Anzac commanders ordered regimental stretcher bearers into the firing line thereby removing them from the control of RMOs. The result was that wounded men were carried back by untrained soldiers, the

Table 11.3 British and Dominion Casualties in Egypt and Palestine

	Officers	Other Ranks	Total
Battle Casualties	3570	47881	51451
Non-battle Casualties	17977	485400	503377
Total	**21547**	**533281**	**554828**
Battle Casualties			
KIA	630	6764	7394
Died of Wounds	232	261	2993
Missing	100	2386	2486
POW	80	1305	1385*
Wounded (less DOW)	2528	34665	37193
Non-battle Casualties			
Died of Disease or Injury	247	5734	5981
Sick or injured (less DOD)	17730	479666	497396
Venereal Disease (hospital admissions)			31,050
Total	**21547**	**533281**	**585878**

* 296 died in captivity

medical officers were unable to form aid posts under cover and sand carts had to be pushed forward into the firing line - all because of an ignorance of doctrine. It had not helped in this instance that bearers had kept their rifles. Some preventative measures (such as draining marshy ground during advances) remained beyond the reach of medical personnel and the force suffered accordingly.

In 1918 during operations in Palestine almost 92 per cent of all sick and wounded were evacuated, rather than being held in field ambulances or casualty clearing stations. Malaria made huge inroads among British, Australian and New Zealand troops in that year. As a comparison total hospital admissions from this disease in 1916, 1917 and 1918 were 1,423, 8,480 and 30,241 respectively.

11.5 Stretcher bearers of the 38th Infantry Brigade (13th Division) bringing in a wounded man during the action of Tuz Khamatli, 29 April 1918 © IWM

The Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force

The fighting here was conducted almost exclusively by divisions of the Indian Army. The force was officially designated the Indian Expeditionary Force (in reality a multi-cultural force), although the 13th British Division deployed to this theatre in 1916. Initially the campaign was directed not by the War Office but from Delhi. As it turned out, this fact contributed to some of the medical problems on this front.

One official history observed: 'The inter-dependence of strategy, tactics and administration was probably never more clearly illustrated than in this campaign.'[7] The expedition's first commander, General Sir John Nixon demonstrated a poor understanding of logistics, a weakness that became apparent during his advance from Basra when a frail medical system quickly unravelled. However, with changes of command from 1916 medical support improved.

The Siege of Kut

Before Ku-al-Amara was besieged in December 1915 a large convoy of sick and wounded had been successful evacuated by river just days before Major General Townsend's retreating column arrived in the town. This left a little over 2,000 casualties in Kut. During the withdrawal the two accompanying field ambulances had lost most of their equipment. Over the following months 78 patients and 67 medical staff were either killed or wounded by enemy fire. Frostbite, gangrene, pleurisy and trench

11.6 Major Dras, Imperial Medical Services, chlorinating drinking water in a desert reservoir, opposite Kut, Sann-i-yat April 1918 © IWM

11.7 Wounded being carried on board a hospital steamer on the River Tigris at Kut-al-Amara in early 1916 © IWM

rheumatism were all prevalent during the colder months; and most of the 30 tetanus cases admitted to hospitals proved fatal. The average daily number of sick was about 1,300 (garrison strength was 14,500). By April 1916 the average hospital death rate was 15 soldiers per day.

Patients were cared for in the most trying circumstances, with most of the force now severely malnourished. Indian soldiers suffered the worst from hunger as many could not eat horseflesh. The use of local wild herbs was successful in managing scurvy. Some medical supplies were bought or manufactured locally or removed from army veterinary stocks. One major innovation was the use of medical supply drops by aircraft of the Royal Flying Corps. Water was treated successfully using a variety of mechanical means and chlorination.

Commentary

The entire area was a health planner's nightmare with extremes of climate, endemic malaria, the lack of water and long evacuation distances. Heat stroke was a real threat as was sand-fly fever which could take a soldier out of the front line for two weeks. Consequently casualty rates were high. But this should have come as no surprise. Mesopotamia is a classic example of the perils of ignoring military medical doctrine and campaigning here 'forcibly demonstrates the losses which accrue from neglect and lack of foresight.'[8] But there was little in medicine's arsenal to protect soldiers from the heat. Troops were still being issued with[9] 'spine protectors' in 1916.

For the first 12 months of the campaign the medical system, worked well before strategy and tactics undermined its ability to support operations. The force was supported by five field ambulances, a 200 bed clearing hospital, a 250-bed stationary hospital and a 600-bed general hospital (which by July 1916 was averaging over 1,000 patients a day); together with smaller auxiliary units. All sick and wounded were evacuated to Bombay or Karachi by sea. Unfortunately the medical plan foundered on a disinterested command (particularly in the first half of the campaign), bad field hygiene, a lack of water, dedicated transport; and adequate supplies and food. Ethnicity became an issue when it came to rations and traditional Hindu and Muslim diets. Generally British troops were better rationed than their Indian Army counterparts, an important consideration in maintaining immunity and adequate vitamin intake.

Most importantly casualties were evacuated forwards with the force instead of rearwards and mobile medical units were stripped of personnel and equipment. Consequently the transport treatment of casualties broke down. 'The sanitary conditions were bad, and despite all peace-time training the troops were without the necessary appliances, materials and chemicals for providing an adequate supply of good water, or for preventing the outbreak of waterborne diseases.'[10]

The main cause of death here from battle casualties was the long time it took to collect them from point of wounding to definitive medical care. Long evacuation lines over difficult country contributed to this situation.

Towards the end of 1915, while the medical situation continued to deteriorate Nixon deliberately withheld information from his superiors on the true health situation.

Dysentery and malaria soon wrought havoc on the troops. The heat was relentless and shade scarce. Morale plummeted and by early 1916 soldiers were presenting in worrying numbers with self-inflicted wounds. Indian army bureaucracy did little to help frustrated medical officers in sending medical reinforcements, evacuation transport and medical stores. Alive at last to a looming disaster the War Office took over the strategic conduct of the campaign in February 1916, while a formal inquiry got underway in Britain.

The most positive outcome of this change was that Nixon was replaced by General Sir Percy Lake (a former Chief of the General Staff, India) in January 1916. Later he was replaced by Lieutenant General Sir Stanley Maude - a veteran of the Western Front and Gallipoli and a new senior medical officer was appointed. His first priority was to improve the casualty evacuation system but he was foiled by a lack of dedicated river transport and a poor re-supply system. Bad nutrition contributed to a series of epidemics in the second half of 1916. But mobile field laboratories were used with good effect and were a key weapon in the British army's medical arsenal in the second half of the

Table 11.4 British and Indian casualties in Mesopotamia

	British			Indian		
	Officers	Other Ranks	Total	Officers	Other Ranks	Total
Battle Casualties	2944	28405	31349	1269	52589	53858
Non-battle Casualties	15710	283064	298774	4252	517392	521644
Total	**18654**	**311469**	**330123**	**5521**	**569981**	**575502**
Battle Casualties						
KIA	629	4403	5032	194	5782	5976
WIA	1915	20821	22736	744	32594	33338
Missing	87	446	533	15	2817	2904
POW	313	2735	3048	229	9602	9831
Non-battle Casualties						
Died of Disease or Injury	241	4534	4775	45	11892	11937
Sick or injured	15469	278530	293999	4207	505500	509707
Total	**15710**	**283064**	**298774**	**4252**	**517392**	**521644**

campaign. There were signs of innovations too, for example the introduction of the River Convoy Unit in June 1916. Better integrated health planning continued under Maude's successor General Sir William Marshall.

From May 1916 the medical infrastructure improved on the front, beginning with the hospital ship *Sikkim* evacuating the first wounded. As noted scurvy broke out during the 146-day siege of Kut but it continued to be a problem elsewhere for the remainder of that year. The vitamin deficient diet, particularly for Indian troops, was a major contributory factor. 'The men suffered from scurvy, colitis, typhoid (enteric fever), dysentery and diarrhoea. Cholera vaccine was obtained for inoculation of affected personnel.'[11] But, like Gallipoli, remaining troops had nowhere to recuperate.

Despite the change in leadership the health effort continued to be hampered by huge distances during the advance to Baghdad. Strategically the cumulative effects were serious as four of the nine divisions were 50 per cent below strength, with no prospect of reinforcements. The good news was a serious expansion of the force's bacteriological staff. Sanitation measures were re-visited and applied vigorously - particularly in forward areas.

By 1917 Maude had secured improved logistical support from the War Office and then used this to improve land transport and properly equipped medical facilities afloat. More importantly senior medical advisors were now given a seat at Maude's operational planning meetings.[12] After the fall of Baghdad in March 1917, the force moved from a highly mobile war, during which the medical services always had to play catch-up, to a period of consolidation and the health of the troops subsequently improved.

11.8 The flag draped coffin of the Commander in Chief Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Maude is carried shoulder high along the soldier lined route to burial He died of cholera Baghdad on 18 November 1917 © IWM

So incompetent were the medical arrangements here in 1915-16 that two investigations were carried out on behalf of the governments of Britain and India. Of the former, the conclusion was that: 'the only people who were not responsible for this were the medical staff in Mesopotamia: but almost everyone else, from the top down was to blame for the key shortages that had produced the disaster[13] - river transport, medical personnel and hospital ships.'

Table 11.5 British, Dominion and other troop casualties in the East Africa Expeditionary Force

	Officers	Other Ranks	Total
Battle Casualties	709	10008	10717
Non-battle Casualties	10416	326124	336540
Total	**11125**	**336132**	**247257**
Battle Casualties			
KIA	164	1925	2089
WIA	53	652	705
Missing	31	655	686
POW	17	197	214
Wounded (less DOW)	444	6579	7023
Non-battle Casualties			
Died of Disease	122	6186	6308
Sick or injured (less DOD)	10294	319938	330232
Total	**11125**	**336132**	**347257**

The East African Expeditionary Force

Unlike the Dardanelles and Macedonia operations here were highly mobile with implications for medical support and effective malaria control measures which took time to put into effect in any location. Malaria, dysentery and pneumonia were main health threats. There was also a new non-military dependency. The care of some 150,000 carriers supporting the force and the numerous hospitals this necessitated placed an enormous strain on the medical services.[14] Not only were there few medical officers deployed to this theatre with specialist knowledge of tropical medicine, the RAMC lost 15 medical officers and 105 Other Ranks every month from disease. Campaigning here also exploded the myth that Indian and African troops were less susceptible to malaria than Caucasian soldiers. 'The struggle was one where, in the early stages, an efficient medical service would have been invaluable...'[15]

Commentary

In addition to malaria, dysentery, black water fever and pneumonia troops of the East Africa Force had to be on their guard against wild animals such as lions and hippopotamuses. In this theatre rationing was extremely difficult to implement, a situation made worse by long distances, the highly mobile nature of the fighting; lack of transport and the effect of the climate on fresh provisions.

Deployed forces here consisted of mainly Indian troops at divisional strength (supported by several general and stationary hospitals, four field ambulances and sundry small medical units). The high incidence of malaria caused infantry units to withdraw and affected other troop deployments and operations on this front. Morale suffered as a result.

In February 1916 a new commander-in-chief, Lieutenant General Jan Smuts arrived with a 13,000 strong force. He had been preceded the month before by Surgeon-General G.D. Hunter who did not like what he saw of the medical organisation. There were still many difficulties associated with medical evacuation. The force was handicapped by lack of medical units, personnel and equipment and the various outposts were far-flung, so that casualties had to be evacuated by a system of relays.

Smuts drove home the message that the responsibility for field hygiene lay with commanders. But disease continued to take its toll. A new commander, Lieutenant General Jacob Deventer, was appointed in May 1917 and he worked more closely with his medical advisors and the whole health system was placed on a more efficient footing, although the lack of transport hampered the health effort which was also retarded by competing schools of thought about the respective merits of quinine and prophylactic measures.

Most of the troops had spent the rainy season of 1916 in high and comparatively healthy locations. For strategic reasons this was not possible in 1917. The results were inevitable. For example, during the month of January the average number of patients in hospital was approximately 10,000. By November they totalled approximately 21,800 (mainly from malaria among indigenous carriers).

In August 1917 the British Government sent out an experienced two-man medical team from London to investigate 'all matters affecting the health of the troops'. They surveyed the front over several months. Most alarmingly they noted that higher command appeared to be unaware of measures adopted on other fronts with regards to rations and disease prevention.

In 1917 two hospital ships were in service for coastal work, while twice a month other hospital ships transported patients to India. Two additional ships were allocated to the force for operational surges to carry patients between Dar-es-Salam and South Africa. While the supply of medical stores, equipment and medical

Table 11.6 Dominion troop casualties in the South-West African Expeditionary Force

	Officers	Other Ranks	Total
Battle Casualties	130	1458	1588
Non-battle Casualties	816	23930	24746
Total	**946**	**25388**	**26334**
Battle Casualties			
KIA	21	164	185
Died of Wounds	3	58	61
Missing/POW	44	738	782
Wounded (less DOW)	62	498	560
Non-battle Casualties			
Died of Disease or Injury	7	174	181
Sick or injured (less DOD)	809	23756	24565
Total	**946**	**25388**	**26334**

staff slowly improved, Medical officers had to struggle against soldiers' prejudices against quinine and officers' reluctance or inability to enforce the use of mosquito nets. Then, towards the end of the campaign the troops began to suffer from the spread of influenza pandemic.

On this front 'the progress of the campaign hinged painfully on the question of health - or rather on the fearful incidence of malaria. The most elementary protection was lacking.'[16]

The South-West African Expeditionary Force

From a health perspective the main challenges of this front were the supply of drinking water, disease prevention and difficult casualty evacuation routes. In comparison with other fronts discussed in this chapter the overall sick rate was relatively low. Indeed the official history noted that the careful arrangements made before campaigning in this theatre resulted in a level of health and efficiency which was comparable to the Western Front.

Commentary

Fighting here was generally one of manoeuvre and movement. But throughout this campaign the medical services adapted and evolved. The system would eventually include ambulance trains and hospital ships supporting an effective casualty evacuation system. In 1914 German SW Africa covered almost 322,000 square miles.

11.9 Nigerian Field Ambulance in camp on ground near Dar-es-Salam, December 1916, on arrival in German East Africa © IWM

Despite the daily employment of 10,000 local labourers to support the force, sickness among them was low and in comparison with S.W. Africa there were no disease outbreaks. Almost 95 per cent of British troops on this front had been inoculated against typhoid. However most of the hospital admissions here were for malaria. Dysentery was also significant, and African troops suffered more than British or Indian troops - as they did with pneumonia. The labour force suffered from the same diseases and conditions, their poor rationing, together with the hard work involved in carrying, being contributing factors. While the influenza pandemic undoubtedly affected the overall force in 1918 no statistics were kept.

The British Salonika Force, Macedonia

As has been made clear elsewhere in this guide Salonika was a quiet front which kept much needed British and French troops (up to 400,000) from the Western Front. But for those who had to sit it out here the environment eroded their health - mainly through malaria. Their subsequent debilitation was one of the main reasons why no major offensives were launched

here until late 1918. Evacuation over the poor road system was supplemented by rail (to British ambulance trains) and sea from Salonika, although this was always subject to the submarine menace.

11.10 A trooper gives a casualty on a camel-borne stretcher a drink of water © IWM

Commentary

But malaria remained the undefeated enemy. Macedonia was a highly malarial area with two strains and this contributed to the virulence of the disease. In 1915 the prevailing view was that it could be controlled by regular doses of quinine. For a time this undermined the more effective measure: prevention. By 1918 'the admission rate for malaria among British troops was a staggering 300 per cent per annum, equivalent to three admissions to hospital per man per year.'[17] The situation was not helped by a Government news blackout for most of 1916/17. This made it difficult for British politicians and medical lobbyists to gauge the true extent of sickness on this front.

Mobile laboratories were used to good effect and were a key weapon in the British army's fight against disease. Enforced sanitation measures and inoculation (especially anti-typhoid) were important preventative measures, although Trench Fever made its appearance on this front. In addition to large numbers of British and Australian nurses, voluntary medical organisations, such as the Scottish Women's Hospitals, provided additional medical support in theatre.

In July 1916, an outbreak of malaria in Macedonia brought more sick to Malta. Weekly convoys arrived with a number of sick varying from 718 to 2,587 per week. To accommodate them the hospital beds and convalescent depot accommodation were gradually increased to 25,570 by adding tentage to the hospitals formed in 1915. 78,130 casualties made their way to hospitals

Table 11.7 British and Dominion casualties in Macedonia*

	Officers	Other Ranks	Total
Battle Casualties	1157	22605	23762
Non-battle Casualties	13843	467419	481262
Total	**15000**	**490024**	**505024**
Battle Casualties			
KIA	145	2652	2797
WIA	76	1223	1299
Missing	74	1510	1584
POW	7	1187	1194
Wounded (less DOW)	855	16033	16888
Non-battle Casualties			
Died of Disease	76	3668	3744
Sick or injured (less DOD)	13767	463751	477518
Total	**15000**	**490024**	**505024**

*Evacuation was aided by a relatively good road and rail network and developed civilian medical and port infrastructure.

11.11 A dressing station seen from an elevated position. Four travoys pulled by mules wait in line outside the dressing station. Each holds a wounded soldier covered in a blanket and they are attended by medical orderlies. In the background is the bright glow of an operating theatre, where surgery is taking place - Stanley Spencer © IWM

on Malta during this campaign. Others were evacuated to Egypt. In 1917, however, submarine attacks on hospital ships made it unsafe to evacuate from Salonika, so five General Hospitals (1040 beds each) were deployed from Malta in May for service there. Like Palestine, the outbreak of the influenza pandemic at war's end made huge calls on the army medical services here.

The British Expeditionary Force in Italy

What sets this campaign apart from the others is that the main cause of sickness was influenza. Despite the fact that typhoid and dysentery in particular were endemic to the local population, these posed no threat to the deployed force. The official medical history notes that '… the campaign in Italy presented no outstanding military medical features.'[18]

Commentary

The medical effort was divided into a road/rail Line of Communication[19] between the ports of Taranto and Cherbourg (because of the submarine threat), with a sea link between Taranto and Carso, north of Trieste (until the end of 1917) and with the Expeditionary Force itself from November 1917. Despite typhoid being endemic in Italy at this time, fewer than 200 British troops presented with this disease. Battle casualties were few so the workload of the medical services was dealing with

11.12 Two horse drawn ambulances on the Salonika Front. Both are covered with camouflaged tarpaulins and marked with the Red Cross © IWM

Table: 11.8 British casualties in Italy

	Officers	Other Ranks	Total
Battle Casualties	409	5912	6321
Non-battle Casualties	3316	47995	51311
Total	**3725**	**53907**	**57632**
Battle Casualties			
KIA	90	1140	1230
WIA	-	58	58
Missing	4	62	66
POW	26	252	278
Wounded (less DOW)	289	4400	4689
Non-battle Casualties			
Died of Disease	26	733	759
Sick or injured (less DOD)	3290	47262	50552
Total	**3725**	**53907**	**57632**

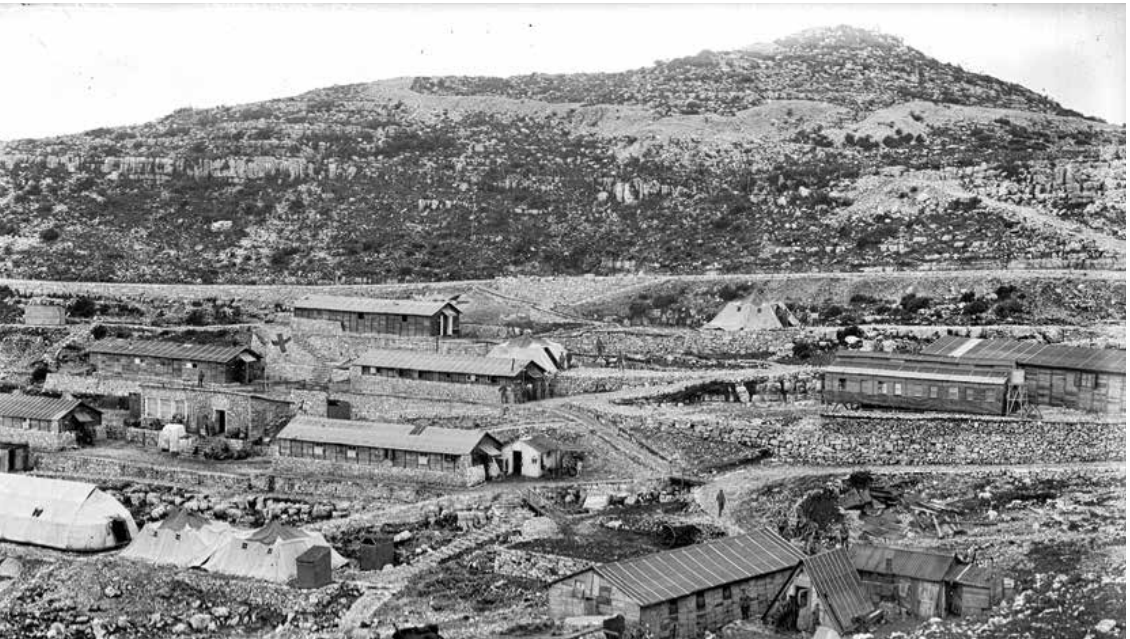
sickness in the force. This remained relatively low until late 1918 when the influenza pandemic appeared. During the 13 months ending December 1918, 10,590 'flu cases were admitted. By that year female nurses, Voluntary Aid Detachments and ambulance drivers were employed on this front.

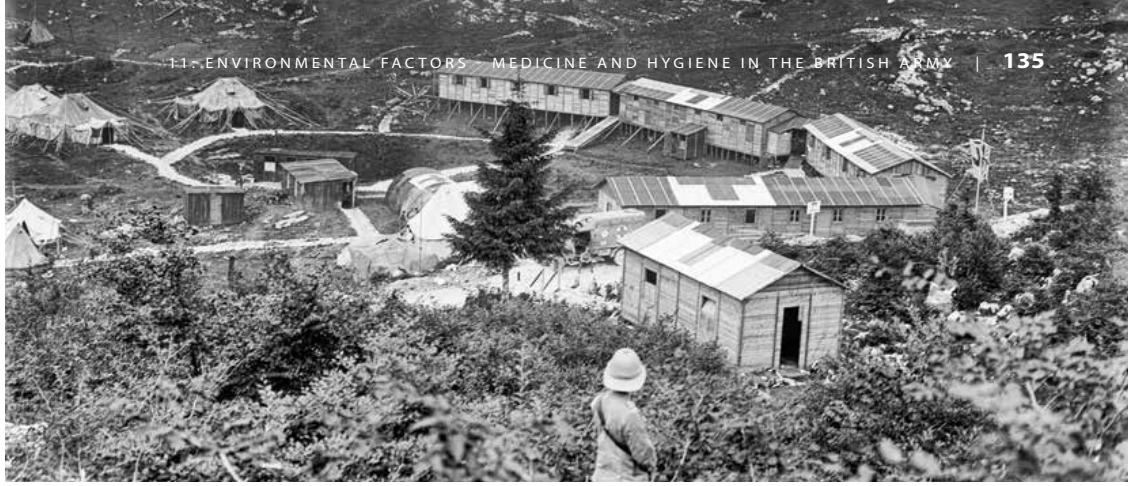
Evacuation was aided by a relatively good road and rail network and developed civilian medical and port infrastructure.

Summary

As can be seen from these case studies there is a link between the military health environment and the outcome of particular operations and campaigns. Some fronts presented particular challenges by way of climate or geography (West Africa, Mesopotamia), while on others it was the personality of the local commander that was a key consideration. Non-battle casualties could, and did, consume enormous medical resources, while also robbing forces of their effective strength. One some fronts this was a lesson not fully understood by some in command until relatively late in the war.

11.13 British Army hospital in the mountains, on the Asiago Plateau © IWM





11.14 A RAMC casualty clearing station sited on the Asiago Plateau, 1918 © IWM

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Endnotes

1. The statistics in all tables are derived from T.G. Mitchell and G.M. Smith, Medical Services: casualties and medical statistics (London: HMSO, 1931). Some data, such as that for S.W. Africa, is incomplete.
2. The RAMC was also responsible for the health of the Native Labour Corps across the empire, an imperial resource rarely commented on nowadays. Indigenous labour in Africa was a significant military asset but these men were prone to sickness and disease and had to be cared for.
3. Mark Harrison, Medicine and British Warfare: British Military Medicine in the First World War (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 178
4. Michael Tyquin, Gallipoli the Medical War (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1993) p. 194.
5. Eran Dolev, Allenby's Military Medicine: Life and Death in World War I Palestine (London: International Library of Colonial History, 2007), p. 2.
6. William Barrett, A Vision of the Possible (London: H.K. Lewis, 1919), p. 118.
7. Australian Military Forces, The Campaign in Mesopotamia up to 30 April 1917 (Melbourne: Army HQ, 1929), p. 140.
8. T.G. Mitchell and G.M. Smith, Medical Services, p. 219.
9. Spine protectors were a type of cummerbund/vest, thought to prevent heat stroke.
10. Ibid., p. 220.
11. Kaushik Roy, From defeat to victory: logistics of the campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914-1918, First World War Studies, Vol.1, Issue 1, March 2010, p. 55.
12. Maude himself died of cholera on 18 November 1917.
13. Charles Townsend, Desert Hell: the British Invasion of Mesopotamia (Mass., Harvard University Press, 2011) p. 236.
14. The death toll among African soldiers and military carriers exceeded 45,000 - or one in eight of the country's adult male population.
15. T.G. Mitchell and G.M. Smith, Medical Services, p. 252.
16. Redmond McLaughlin, The Royal Army Medical Corps (London: Leo Cooper, 1972), p. 50.
17. Mark Harrison, Medicine and British Warfare: British Military Medicine in the First World War (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 233.
18. T.G. Mitchell and G.M. Smith, Medical Services, p.176.
19. A Line of Communication was the route (land or maritime) between units at the front and their operational bases in more secure areas.

12.1 Our Export Trade is Vital - Buy Victory Bonds © IWM

12. Strategic and Operational Supply, and the British War Effort - The Role of the Sea

Greg Kennedy

Introduction

To understand how Great Britain fought the First World War, it is paramount to understand the role control of the sea played. At both the strategic and operational level the ability to use the sea to create and distribute power (economic, fiscal, industrial and military power) was the British centre of gravity for the war. At the strategic level the continued ability to utilize the seas ensured access to essential raw materials, manpower, and markets. Goods and services could be created from this position which could be used directly by the British war effort, sold to generate wealth, and, indeed, most importantly show the fiscal and economic solvency of the British Empire continued to be a worthy credit risk. This ability to generate the necessary international credit to be able to finance not only its own but indeed the entire Entente's war efforts, relied completely on Great Britain being able to use the seas with total confidence and authority.

Naval Manoeuvres in 1913 caused the Admiralty to have to issue a note of caution to strategic planners as to the reliability of Britain's oceanic trade, particularly with regard to the North Sea. East Coast trade from the North Sea was vulnerable to some disruption from mining and surface raiders. However, the rise in insurance rates and difficulties in finding qualified crews, were an even greater threat to the disruption of normal trade flows to the ports along Great Britain's East Coast. By February 1914, discussions within the Committee of Imperial Defence, regarding trade during the time of war, were considering how to relocate 54,000,000 tons of trade from East Coast ports to West Coast ports if the East Coast was less secure than the West. The answer to these questions regarding the protection of British seaborne trade during war revolved around two central points.

12.2 Workers unloading timber from the British cargo ship SS *Jane Radcliffe* © IWM

Control of the Sea

The first issue was in relation to the ability of the Royal Navy (RN) to control the seas. A primary strategic assumption was that the RN could impose a complete blockade on enemy attempts to utilize the seas for their own trading purposes. This ability to deny the use of the seas to a continental foe was a tried and tested British response to continental threats. This strategy was dependent on the RN being able to defeat all enemy navies and prevent them from (1) attacking British shipping, and (2) attacking and weakening the combat effectiveness of the RN itself. The establishment of such Sea Control assured the second key strategic condition: freedom of use of the seas to mobilize imperial power for Britain's war effort. With full access to the required sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) in place, strategic and operational use of the SLOCs would enable Great Britain to maintain its strong fiscal/industrial base, financial strength and material support to its own growing military organisation, as well as ensure other allied nations were able to continue to fight. Therefore, when war broke out in 1914, the use of Britain's superiority at sea was not something that needed to be invented or adapted to the condition of war in Europe. The relationship between such a war effort and the Empire was already clearly drawn. The Royal Navy would create the shield for a global shipping and trading network that would provide the men, money and material for Britain and her allies.

At the beginning of the war Britain and its imperial maritime system controlled 48 per cent (12,439,800 net tons) of the world's steam-powered shipping, as opposed to 12 per cent by Germany and 4.6 per cent by the United States. This tonnage delivered 64 per cent of the calories required by the British population and underpinned the prosperity and productivity of all of the staple British industries. Immediately upon the outbreak of the war in August 1914, however, the pace and use of British merchant shipping underwent little outward change. Cargoes became more expensive and insurance premiums rose as well, and finding crews became slightly more difficult until appropriate adjustments to wartime wages were made. Tonnage was concentrated on acquiring key material resources, such as metals, hides, foodstuffs and munitions, but overall this initial period of British global maritime commercial activity was unremarkable, so much so that it is historically known as the 'period of business as usual.' Such a condition, under the pressures of industrial warfare on the scale now being seen in Europe, could not be sustained for long.

Britain's Finances

By October 1915 the financial circumstances of the Allies, and in particular Great Britain's role as banker for the alliance, was putting unheard of strains on the fiscal power of the island nation. At that time the daily cost of the war for Britain was £3 million per day, or, £1.314 billion per year. Of that total, £1 million per day, totalling £365 million per year, was being spent on the Allies and dominions. Arms and munitions for Russia, for example, were bought in Canada, Great Britain, and the United States, while shipping of food and other war goods were also being provided for all the Allies. Such a circumstances was a doubly-hard strain on the British war effort, as the nation was having to finance the purchase of the goods and munitions (with wealth derived from the use of its merchant shipping fleet), as well as provide the shipping needed to move the raw materials and finished goods around the world. For example, both France and Italy received coal, timber, shipping services, munitions, food, and other consumables from funds provided by Britain. Without the British credit and material assistance, all three continental allies would have been exhausted by 1917 and Britain would have stood alone against its continental foes. The inability of its allies to be able to fund their own war efforts put enormous strain on the British maritime power to generate wealth and credit. In particular, that maritime strength was required in order to be able to purchase unique access to American goods and credit, the Atlantic lifeline for the Entente's war effort.

In October 1915 Reginald McKenna, chancellor of the exchequer, believed that Britain's finances and its mobilization of industry for war now made the conduct of the war along the lines of 'business as usual' unrealistic. Indeed, it was his view that British maritime power would be able to continue to harness the productive energies of the world for the benefit of the Entente's war effort, but only if strenuous efforts were made to expand the efficiency and volume of munition production, luxuries were curtailed and loans were raised in conjunction with a coordinated plan for the sale of securities. The bulk of these efforts relied on the continued reliance and effectiveness of the strategic global trading and resource network maintained by the British merchant fleet. The strength of the network, even when required to support three additional allies, was such that by October 1916 Britain was still in a position to last three months without a public issue in the United States, if necessary.

McKenna acknowledged, however, that even Britain's maritime global power had limits to what it could achieve on its own, and that British autonomy in terms of financial power would never be the case again. Britain's drift towards insolvency was being created not through any weakness of its own making but rather because of the inability of its Allies to be able to secure sufficient funds to support their war effort. This Entente dependence on British global maritime financial power forced Britain to lend to its Allies and then seek loans that only British imperial resources could secure in America and other parts of the Empire. Therefore, given the centrality of the maritime commercial, trade, supply and finance aspects of the British war effort, a close and constant evaluation of the shipping situation was required.

Available Shipping

In March 1916 reports still could not clearly identify new shipping construction, thus making forecasts of available tonnage and management of the overall shipping effort difficult to predict. The requisitioning of merchant shipping had now provided over 2,000 more hulls totalling over 7,000,000 tons of gross tonnage to the available fleet. However, port congestion, scarcity of dock labour, voyage and cargo management was still not being centralized and allowing voyages to be made partly with ballast, direct voyages or round trips, all had a material effect on the actual carrying power in use. Making more economical and efficient use of the available tonnage was as big an issue as dealing with ships lost to submarine action. Furthermore, the use of prizes and interned enemy ships had been a contributing factor to the ability of the Allied shipping system to keep pace with those sinkings. New building alone, given the ever growing demands of the war effort, in conjunction with the appreciation that enemy action would continue to cause attrition on the shipping pool, implied that a greater emphasis on new construction would be required immediately. To manage these strategic supply issues the Board of Trade began to coordinate other government departments and establish a committee system to deal with the situation. An increase in new merchant shipbuilding was to be a national priority, with the Admiralty, Board of Trade and Ministry of Munitions in the lead. Finally, the rationalisation of supply across the alliance was required immediately so that the limited shipping available was not wasted in trying to support Russian, Italian, French and British needs inefficiently. The establishment of the Shipping Control Committee under the leadership of Lord George Curzon was designed to do just that.

12.3 Bags of flour unloaded from a ship at Liverpool docks © IWM

By the middle of 1916 the German U-boat attacks were starting to have an impact on the British strategic supply effort. Even with the largest crops of wheat from Canada, the United States, Argentina and Australia ready for sale, purchasing them was a problem for the allies. The problem was not one of profiteering from any of the producing nations. The problem was one of available shipping and what a shortage of shipping was doing to the price of wheat in Europe. Prices for wheat were extremely high because of the lack of ship tonnage to bring the wheat to Europe, and the demands of France, Italy and the neutral countries for immediate supplies of wheat were insistent. The result was a ferocious competition for British shipping tonnage, as well as European, which drove up the price of every ton of wheat. Breaking from 'doing business as usual' with regard to free market forces governing the use of shipping and setting of commodity prices, the British Government led the way in eliminating competition for such goods amongst the Allies. All the purchases, whether for the British, French, or Italian armies, or for the civil population of the United Kingdom and of Italy, were put into the hands of agencies controlled by a central Allied Committee which contained national representatives from all Entente nations. Centralized government control of prices and distribution of goods throughout the alliance relied on the careful control and direction of primarily British merchant shipping.

1917 - A critical Shortage of Shipping

The ramifications of the damage to the overall war effort if strategic shipping management was not effective is best illustrated by the situation arrived at by early 1917. In February 1917, the Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Munitions informed the War Cabinet that the shortage of shipping was now at a point where a choice would have to be made between producing munitions, or, acquiring enough wheat supplies to ensure that not only the British population, but its allies as well, were provided. Choices between using the shrinking tonnage pool for food or munitions was becoming critical for Britain's own war effort, as well as its allies. Compounding the problem was the nature of British merchant shipping support to Italy and France for coal, and for munitions to Russia.

With Allied strategic shipping requirements being stretched to breaking point by the end of 1916, an Allied Naval Conference was convened on January 23rd and 24th to agree a way forward regarding the best use of the strategic shipping pool.

The conference, held in London, agreed that each nation limit the consumption of non-essential articles in order to make room for cargoes directly related to the war effort. To achieve that end, a Standing International Shipping Committee was to be established to exchange national information on how merchant shipping was being used by each individual nation, in order that opportunities for co-operative programmes for acquisition, purchase and transportation could be established. Such efficiencies could only be realized if better port and railway coordination was also integrated into this maritime system so that congestion and duplication could be eliminated as much as possible.

Furthermore, the arming of the merchant ships, construction of escort vessels to protect them from submarines, a prioritisation of merchant shipping over warships, rationalisation of shipping in the Mediterranean, and rationing and reduction of imports, were all steps agreed during the conference. France announced it had stopped all construction of battleships and submarines, so that the vital steel could be used to construct merchant ships. With such actions, the submarine threat was thought to be manageable, at least until the summer. At that point a re-assessment of shipping losses would have to made, and the

12.4 Men working in the stoke hold of a merchant ship © IWM

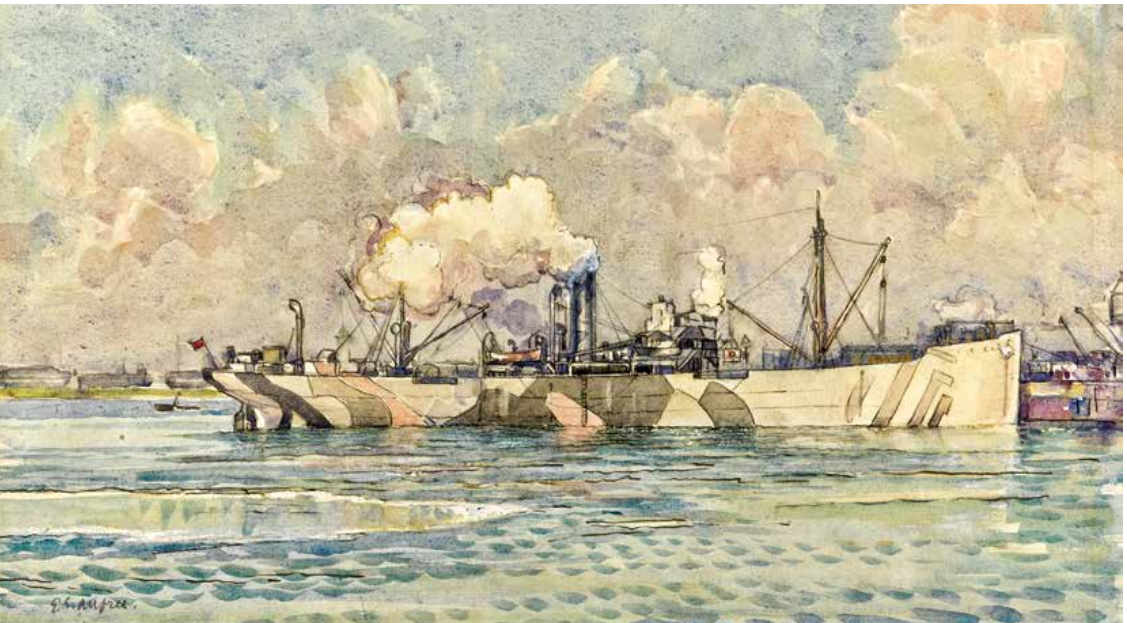
overall Allied war effort adjusted accordingly, if, the measures being taken had not rectified the shipping crisis. Part of overcoming that shipping deficit was, also, to ask for an even greater effort from the far-flung parts of the British Empire.

By January 1917 British shipping was required to provide the shipping to deliver 260,000 tons of coal to France every month. That amount allocated 190,000 tons of coal for French railways and 70,000 for its navy, a task that consumed 41 vessels per month. However, due to congestion in their ports, the scarcity of neutral shipping available and embargoes, France found itself almost 25% short of the necessary 2,000,000 tons of coal required every month. Through the Entente's central supply allocation committee, the Commission Internationale de Revitaillement, France requested that 1,000,000 tons of British shipping be made available to replenish the diminished French coal stocks. It was a request that could not be met.

Italian demands for coal required the Admiralty to provide 50,000 tons of shipping per month. That nation too was unable to meet its forecast 800,000 tons per month target for coal tonnage. In fact, at an International Shipping Conference in early January 1917, Italy revealed that it could only find 465,000 tons a month for coal supplies, leaving a permanent deficit of 340,000 tons. Agreement was reached at the conference whereby Britain would increase its coal shipments to Italy to 274,000 tons in February, however, this followed on from an already significant British investment in shipping to help the Italians deal with their coal situation. In December 1916 they had appealed to the Admiralty to provide an additional 180,000 extra tons of coal in addition to the monthly supply of 50,000 already being furnished, a request that was granted.

By 1917 then, in order to enable these shifts in tonnage requirements to meet the Italian winter coal crisis, Great Britain was obliged to take extreme steps with regard to its maritime strategic supply system. Firstly, they diverted Atlantic Liners to the Mediterranean before those vessels proceeded to the United States to load, thereby reducing the imports of munitions and wheat to Britain by the amount of extra coal carried to Italy. Secondly, specific Admiralty shipping was diverted from providing coal to Naval Depots in the Mediterranean and instead providing that coal to Italy, an act that diminished considerably coal stocks for the Royal Navy. Thirdly, the Shipping Controller re-assigned some neutral shipping which had been chartered for the importation of wheat to take on coal instead. Finally, shipping used to provide coal for the Egyptian State Railways was directed to deliver its coal cargo to Italy instead.

12.5 A dazzle camouflaged Merchant Navy transport ship, which is moored in Portsmouth harbour - Geoffrey Allfree © IWM



Dominion and Imperial Contributions

By 1917, the imperial contribution to the strategic maritime supply effort had exceeded all pre-war estimates. From the start of the war, Canada had sent over 250,000 troops, 41,000 horses and millions of tons of food, munitions and other vital war supplies. At the beginning of the war fourteen transports were used to ship these vitals stores from Canada to Great Britain. However, as the volume of materials purchased for the war effort grew, so too did the number of transports provided. By the end of 1916, 55 transports, averaging six to seven sailings per week, were ensuring the timely delivery of those goods. At the end of that year the total tonnage delivered from Canada exceeded two million. It had requisitioned liners for the transport of those troops, constructed a limited number of small merchant ships to replace those lost to enemy action, and re-oriented Great Lakes shipping to the Atlantic trade routes to make up for those short-falls, to the detriment of local Canadian businesses.

12.6 Three Canadian merchant ships are docked in port. Each flies a Union flag and Canadian Dominion flag. Our Best Customer © IWM

India too had contributed significantly to the maritime strategic supply effort. From the beginning of the war, the Government of India had provided all the tonnage required to convey troops, horses and stores from India to the various theatres around the world where Indian troops were employed. The Indian expeditions to France, Egypt, Mesopotamia and East Africa had all been carried out almost entirely by transports requisitioned by the Government of India without British government support. By 1917 links between the Indian merchant shipping requisition system and the British were intimately connected, making the smooth and efficient use of the precious hulls as useful as possible for both parties. The story was similar for New Zealand, Australia and South Africa.

From the beginning of the war until 1917, Australia had provided the shipping required to supply 290,000 troops and 38,000 horses to both Egypt and the United Kingdom. The Australians requisitioned and fitted out their own transports and undertook the overall control and responsibility for the outward shipment of men, materials and animals. Critically, besides ensuring the shipment of those items from Australia to Britain, Australian transports played a vital role in conveying troops from across the Empire, stores and horses throughout the Mediterranean Sea to various fronts. Australian transports, once they had deposited their cargoes in UK ports, were utilized on the return journey to convey troops, material and goods to India, Mesopotamia, South Africa, East Africa, and from West Africa to East Africa with native troops. Australian hospital ships transported casualties from the United Kingdom to Australia, as well as other injured soldiers from Bombay and Egypt back to Great Britain.

New Zealand and South Africa had also done their part in the strategic maritime supply role. New Zealand, like Australia, had arranged for its own expeditionary forces to be transported to

12.7 Worker operating pneumatic hammer on a merchant ship during construction © IWM

the Middle Eastern theatre. Ships transited from Egypt to the United Kingdom empty but then were used to either transport casualties back to New Zealand or to carry imperial cargoes out to the Dominion. South Africa, as well, had managed its maritime transport separately without any assistance or direction from the British government apparatus. Reinforcements to the United Kingdom and expeditionary forces to East Africa were carried with support from the Royal Navy Commander in Chief in the Cape. Captured German merchant ships were, by 1917, being used by South Africa to move wheat from Australia for distribution to not only South Africa but also to Great Britain. The most significant factor, however, influencing the British merchant shipping and strategic supply system in 1917 was the entry of the United States into the war as a belligerent on the Allied side.

The Entry of the USA

The fledgling American merchant marine was unable to meet the demands of American mobilization and transportation overseas. A relatively small, coastal service, the US merchant fleet suffered from a lack of ships and inability of American industry to increase its shipbuilding capacity. Despite attempts to buy command over the Allied maritime effort, the realities of a lack of useable tonnage prevented the United States from challenging the British control over maritime operations for the coalition. As late as March 1918 predictions suggested that the actual American shipbuilding effort for 1918 would be only two million tons, as opposed to the six million tons originally promised. As a result of this shortcoming, British merchant shipping was put under even greater strain.

By the autumn of 1917 British merchant shipping was responsible not only for balancing the munitions and food requirements of the alliance, but also for moving over one million American troops across the Atlantic. The deficiencies in American merchant transport were made clear during the German offensive in the spring of 1918. At that point, the Allies faced a manpower crisis on the continent that forced the British to implement emergency shipping measures to move more American troops to Europe. The need to assist the Americans came as close to undermining the British maritime strategic supply ability to support the total war effort, as well as Britain's overall ability to create military power, as did the activities of the German U-boats.

Even after the immediate crisis had passed, the inability of American shipbuilding to increase the tonnage output necessary to meet the growing demands of the increasing American forces overseas forced British shipping to continue to carry that particular burden. In late 1917 Sir Joseph Maclay, the shipping controller, told the war cabinet that Britain had reached a state of perpetual emergency regarding shipping due to the American needs; and that extraordinary and drastic measures relating to cargo and route choices were being implemented to meet the crisis. Australia and New Zealand were unable to ship cereal crops or meat. Coal shipments to France and Italy were being greatly reduced. American requests for coal in France and

tonnage to supply the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) were still, however, increasing. During the sitting of the Imperial War Cabinet and the meeting of the Committee of Prime Ministers in August 1918, the situation was put into sharp relief by the United Kingdom Government's report:

> ***… the British government are constantly pressed by their Allies, and particularly by the French, to maintain the existing number of Divisions. And, on the other hand, there is no diminution in the demands made by our Allies, great and small, for shipping, repairs to shipping, coal, steel, woollen goods, railway material, and all kinds of military stores and equipment….Owing to the fact that the bulk of submarine losses occur in North European waters, the increase in the American Mercantile Marine similarly involves an increased demand for repair facilities for American ships. Only lately America has asked for an increase in the supplies of British coal…and only recently Great Britain has had to supply and ship a strategic reserve of 150,000 tons of coal for Italy. For the United States of America, Great Britain has had to undertake a great programme of textile manufacture. All these industrial claims make both a direct and indirect demand on British man-power: direct, so far as man-power is necessary for the actual manufacture; indirect, so far as it involves the importation of additional raw materials, with an increased burden on shipping, ports and means of inland transportation.***[1]

The Growing Demands of British and Allied Overseas Expeditions

However, as dangerous as the increased demands by America and the Allies were to the overall British strategic supply effort, it was the growing British and Allied overseas expeditions requiring operational support from the maritime domain that represented an equally dangerous threat to Britain's maritime supply resilience. The same pool of limited tonnage that was being asked to move wheat, hides, munitions, coal, troops, meat and ore around the world, was also being asked to move horses, men, munitions and supplies to the various operational theatres stretching, by 1918, from Southern Europe to East Africa. As such, the careful and coordinated management of those critical shipping resources was the key enabling factor in the establishment and sustainment of all expeditionary operations.

British maritime resources assisting French and Italian naval forces guarding the crucial sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) in the Mediterranean in 1917 amounted to three battleships, three cruisers, nine light cruisers, two large monitors, twelve small monitors, three minelayers, thirty-seven destroyers, sixteen torpedo-boats, eight submarines, twenty-four sloops, ten armed boarding steamers, and two seaplane carriers. Supporting this main British force were a further eight yachts, 178 trawlers, ninety-four motor launches, ten patrol-paddlers, two motor boats, 163 net-drifters and four boom defence craft. Added to that list were the warships and support vessels assigned to the East Indian, China and Far Eastern, Australian, Cape, Sierra Leone, East Africa, Pacific, and North American and West Indian stations: 173 warships in all. The naval contribution was matched by 718 naval and military transports (some 2,108,632 tons) continually carrying troops and stores to the expeditionary forces in France, India, East Africa, Salonika, Egypt and Mesopotamia. Three hundred and ninety transports (818,456 tons) were similarly employed in supporting British operations in France, and thirty-five transports of 162,110 tons carried British troops and stores to East Africa. The forces in Salonica and Egypt required 176 ships of 657,274 tons, and Mesopotamia and India used 117 vessels of 470,792 tons. The allocation of merchant and naval resources was a careful balancing act under favourable conditions, but, the growing threat of sinkings by German U-boats made this commitment to an operational tempo even more precarious.

By the spring of 1917 because of merchant tonnage losses and the refusal of British strategists to discontinue overseas operations, it was forecast that Britain would be eight million tons short in terms of imports for 1918. Added importance was placed on purchasing foreign vessels or hiring neutrals to operate in safer Dominion waters. Additionally, priority was given to the shipping lanes between Great Britain and North America. The shorter routes and the growing volume of goods and materials to be purchased in North America would, it was hoped, allow strategic supply to be obtained and operational supply delivered. By April 1917, with the full knowledge of the British Cabinet that such a use of its valuable merchant shipping resource would have an adverse impact on Britain's post-war economic recovery, the tonnage diverted from these routes amounted to over 500,000 tons. A further thirty coastal and short-trade steamers were withdrawn from the services of Indo-China and the China Navigation companies in the eastern Seas. Those thirty ships were used to replace vessels serving the Mesopotamian Expedition, thus releasing ocean-going tonnage to the North Atlantic routes. Overall, the naval situation at the operational level was exercising a greater influence on the overall war effort. Although it was unlikely that the Allies would be knocked out of the war in 1918 because of shipping shortages, the future was not guaranteed. Britain was potentially selling its dominant position in terms of control of shipping routes and future strategic maritime lift for the ability to support short-term operational needs while sustaining strategic supply efforts. The rapid and surprising end to the war saved the United Kingdom from having to make even more difficult maritime power choices in 1919 that might have fundamentally changed Great Britain's maritime dominance.

The Effect of the War on Britain's Maritime Position

The reality of the British Empire's effort in the war at sea was that its strategic maritime position was only slightly changed from what it had been before the war. Despite having been the key enabler for the Entente's entire range of maritime lift requirements, as well as the creator of the financial and industrial power that under-wrote that alliance, Britain's maritime dominance was still formidable. No longer the financial centre of the industrialized world, Britain now shared that place with the United States. That new reality was not indicative of any impending doom or inevitable decline. Britain's industrial base was still strong and its imperial ties functioning effectively, giving it great strength to rebuild and reconstruct itself from the damage caused by the war.

12.9 Female ship yard workers preparing shoring timbers at a naval ship building yard © IWM

12.10 U 14 © LoC - George Grantham Bain Collection

The Royal Navy was still the world's premier naval force and a benchmark for the aspiration of others. The merchant marine was modernized and expanded, with a large onshore construction and supporting infrastructure in the ports and railway linkages inland, thus allowing it to regain the dominant role it had traditionally played in the world's commercial activity.

The rival empires of Germany and Russia had been destroyed, and France was severely weakened. The struggle for domination of the international global trade and commercial power would now be joined with the United States, but now as a former ally, which made those competitive tensions far different from what they had been prior to the war.

Thus, it is no exaggeration to claim the absolute centrality of the strategic and operational maritime power provided by Great Britain to the successful waging of the war on the Allied side, as well as protecting Great Britain and its empire from even greater damage than that suffered by its continental friends and foes.

Endnotes

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13.1 Francis Bertie, the British Ambassador in France, with Herbert Asquith, the British Prime Minister, in Paris, 27 March 1916 © IWM

13. The Higher Control of the War

Professor David French

Introduction - Pre-War Preparations

In 1902 the Conservative Prime Minister, A. J. Balfour, established the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID). He hoped that it would bring together politicians and senior service professionals to form a genuinely imperial general staff which could develop a coherent strategic policy for the whole of the British Empire. His hopes were only partially fulfilled. In 1908-9 the CID did examine the military needs of the Empire in the event of a war with Germany. What their work revealed was the rampant departmentalism that divided the armed services. The General Staff argued that in the event of war the British Expeditionary Force should be sent as quickly as possible to France. The Admiralty, however, wanted to land it on the German coast as part of their strategy of defeating Germany by a naval blockade. Faced with these choices, ministers decided not to decide. The Liberal Prime Minister, H. H. Asquith, considered instead that the expediency of sending troops to France or of relying upon a naval blockade was a question that could only be decided when the crisis arose.

Although the admirals still hankered after a blockade strategy, following a major war scare in the summer of 1911 the Admiralty was ordered to prepare plans to transport the army to France. When news of this leaked to the cabinet several ministers were furious when they learnt that preparations were being made for a continental commitment behind their backs. For its part between 1911 and 1914 the CID devoted most of its efforts to ensuring that the outbreak of war did not lead to the dislocation and collapse of the British economy. The General Staff did not expect a short war. They could not foretell how long it might last, but in 1912 they did insist that it would not be safe to assume that it would last for less than six months. What everyone seemed to agree on was that Britain's contribution would be limited to its existing armed forces, and there were no plans to mobilise the economy for war.

'Business as Usual'

In August 1914 the CID closed its doors, and the General Staff decamped from the War Office and went to France where they formed the staff of the BEF. At the Admiralty the Admiralty Naval Staff, which had only been formed in 1912, proved incapable of restraining the headstrong First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill. The British did impose a blockade on Germany, but they also sent the army to France. That was made possible because the Director of Military Operations, Sir Henry Wilson, had concerted his preparations with his French counterparts. But the decision to put those plans into operation was only taken by an improvised and hastily convened War Council on 5 and 6 August, after Britain had actually declared war.

13.2 British Prime Minister David Lloyd George and Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, in conversation during the Inter-Allied Committee Conference of 3 June 1918 © IWM

13.3 The Imperial War Cabinet in the garden of 10 Downing Street, 1918. From top right to left: William Weir, General Frederick Sykes, Colonel G. Lambert, Colonel Amery, Lieutenant Colonel Maurice Hankey, Arthur Meighen, Satyendra Prasanno Sinha, Colonel Storr. Middle row left to right: Admiral Rosslyn Wemyss, Joseph Ward, M.W. Rowell, Walter Long, George Nicolli Barnes, Lord Curzon, General Smuts, Austin Chamberlain, J.A. Calder, H. Burton, Edwin Samuel Montagu, Joseph Maclay, General G.M. Macdonagh. Front row left to right: William Ferguson Massey, The Maharajah of Patiala, Andrew Bonar Law, Robert Border, David Lloyd George, William Morris Hughes, Arthur Balfour, Joseph Cook, W.F. Lloyd © IWM

In the first nine months of the war control of British strategic policy fell into the hands of Lord Kitchener, the Empire's most distinguished soldier. Asquith had appointed him as Secretary of State for War on 5 August 1914. Convinced that the war would not be over quickly, and that the issues at stake were so enormous that all of the belligerents would have to make their maximum effort in order to achieve victory, Kitchener quickly began to raise a huge army of volunteers. But they would take time to prepare, and in the meantime Britain's allies, Russia and France, would have to assume the main burden of the continental land war. Britain's contribution would be restricted to sending the BEF to France as a token of its commitment to the entente, while simultaneously the navy would strangle the economies of the Central Powers and the British would lend money to their allies so they could pay for their war efforts. By late 1916 the land forces of the Continental belligerents would be exhausted, but the British army would be unbloodied, and in early 1917 the British would be able to intervene decisively on the continent and dictate peace terms to their enemies and their allies.

This was the strategy of 'business as usual'. It would offer a nation of shopkeepers the maximum possible victory at the minimum possible cost. However, success would depend on the willingness of France and Russia to continue fighting without significant British support on land for two years, but by 1915 it became apparent that they were not willing to act as Britain's continental catspaws. It was when they demanded a bigger and quicker British commitment to the land war that the British government found itself confronted with the most basic conundrum of civil-military relations, how best to co-ordinate naval and military policy at the highest level, and at the same time to bring politicians responsible ultimately to Parliament into meaningful co-operation with the naval and military experts.

The Structure of Cabinet Government

Initially Asquith tried to run the war through the peacetime Cabinet of over 20 ministers. But by November 1914 it was apparent that such a body was too large, and so he established a small War Council of those ministers most intimately involved in the war effort. When the Liberal government was replaced by a coalition government in May 1915 the War Council gave way, first to the Dardanelles Committee, and then to the War Committee. But each of these cabinet committees suffered from the same basic defect. They could debate policy, but only the full Cabinet could have the final say. This proved to be a recipe for delay. It gave ministers with widely differing strategic views ample opportunities to block decisions they did not like.

Matters did improve after December 1916 when Asquith was ousted from Downing Street and replaced as prime minister by David Lloyd George. His first decision was to establish a small War Cabinet, largely composed of non-departmental ministers. In 1917, and again in 1918, in an effort to co-ordinate and mobilise the resources of the empire more effectively, Lloyd George also invited statesmen from the Dominions and India to London where they joined their British colleagues to form an Imperial War Cabinet. In May 1915 Asquith had created a Ministry of Munitions to mobilise the engineering and chemical industries to give the army the weapons and ammunition it needed. Lloyd George added other ministries tasked with overseeing particular

13.4 Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, 1st Bt, by Sir William Newenham Montague Orpen, oil on canvas, 1919 © NPG

aspects of the war effort, such as shipping, food control, national service, air, reconstruction and labour. An aura of dynamism and efficiency hovered around the Lloyd George War Cabinet which had never surrounded its predecessors. This was in no small part due to the work of the first Cabinet Secretary, Sir Maurice Hankey. Hankey, an officer in the Royal Marines, had served on the CID since 1908, first as an assistant to its secretary, and then, from 1912, as its secretary himself. Beginning on Christmas Day 1914 he had submitted a series of papers to the War Council, the Dardanelles Committee and the War Committee. Their cogency, together with a report he presented to the Dardanelles Committee in August 1915 after a personal reconnaissance of the allied position at Gallipoli, so raised his status that henceforth he acted not only as the secretary to the most important cabinet committees, but also as the personal adviser to the Prime Minister. Indeed, before the re-establishment of the General Staff in London in September 1915, he was one of the few sources of professional military advice available to the Asquith Cabinet. Although he owed his earlier advancement to Asquith, he found no difficulty in shifting his loyalty to Lloyd George. His influence grew under Lloyd George when he held a post at the very heart of the government. He saw the Prime Minister more frequently than any cabinet minister, he attended every important cabinet and cabinet committee, and he kept the minutes of all their most secret meetings.

Hankey's War Cabinet secretariat existed to record the cabinet's decisions and to ensure that they were passed expeditiously to those ministries charged with carrying them out. But even Hankey's legendary energy could not prevent government business from becoming congested. Lloyd George's solution was not new. By March 1915 the Asquith cabinet had already spawned thirty eight sub-committees to oversee the conduct of particular areas of work created by the war. Lloyd George merely adopted the same expedient on a much larger scale. Although the War Cabinet met daily in 1917-18 the only way that it could avoid becoming swamped by business was to devolve an increasing amount of its work to sub-committees. Consequently, the full War Cabinet increasingly acted as a supervisory authority regulating the decisions of more junior bodies, rather than as a plenary body taking decisions itself.

'Frocks' versus 'Brasshats'

This was the administrative framework within which the two main areas of conflict in civil-military relations were fought out. The first of these was how to determine the proper spheres of competence of those whom Sir Henry Wilson termed the 'Frocks' and the 'Brasshats', that is the civil authorities and their professional service advisers. The second set of issues, which were equally important in a coalition war, was how best could the British organise and harmonize their relations with their allies.

Asquith's critics disparaged him as being incapable of taking decisive action. Lloyd George's critics frequently damned him as an amateur strategist. There was enough substance in both charges to lend them credibility, but their critics also ignored the real and valuable attributes that both men brought to the task of war leadership. Asquith was temperamentally ill-suited to play the role of a populist war leader. Before the war his preferred political style was the often time consuming process of creating consensus within his party and Cabinet and the war did not change him. Thus, in 1915-16 he deliberately prevaricated over the introduction of military conscription. Not only might it shatter national unity, but he shared the widespread fear that if too many men were placed in uniform Britain might go bankrupt before Germany was defeated. As a war leader Asquith was a facilitator who enabled others to take the initiative. He thus stood on a different plane from his successor. Lloyd George was not only a master of the political arts of persuasion and intrigue, but he also tried to be a strong executive, and he relished debate. However, he also possessed the defects of these strengths. He had little time for colleagues who lacked his mental nimbleness in debate. Once he had made up his mind he could only see one side of a question, and he was sometimes dangerously prone to wishful thinking. But whilst Lloyd George knew little of geography or logistics he was not an amateur strategist. Indeed, his understanding of the scope of strategy extended beyond that of many of his professional advisers. Even before the Somme he exhibited a keener appreciation than most ministers of the bond between domestic morale and military victory. As early as January 1915 he had recognized that Kitchener's New Armies, unlike the pre-war regulars, were deeply rooted in the community. Heavy casualties which secured no apparent gains would soon sap popular support at home for continuing the war. As a politician who prided himself on interpreting the wishes of the people he was, throughout the war, keenly aware that the public would demand tangible victories as justification for the sacrifices they were undergoing. Privately by late 1916 he feared that a strong peace party might emerge in Britain if losses on the scale of the Somme were repeated in 1917.

The senior soldiers and sailors who acted with their political colleagues to devise British strategy occupied an ambiguous position in the First World War. Their predecessors had been able to justify their elevated status by claiming that they provided models of heroic leadership. But by 1914 the scope of the British war effort was so huge that the soldiers and sailors who sat across the table from Asquith and Lloyd George also had to exhibit the qualities of skilled managers. At the end of 1915 the General Staff was reconstituted in London. Its new chief, Sir William Robertson, shunted Kitchener aside and demanded that henceforth he must be ministers' only source of military advice. Given his suspicion that, 'politicians only do things to retain popularity and votes', he also insisted that they had no right to question his advice. Politicians and soldiers must each keep within their own sphere, and that,

> ***"Where the politician goes wrong is in wanting to know the why and the wherefore of the soldier's proposals, and of making the latter the subject of debate and argument across a table. You then have the man who knows but who cannot talk discussing important questions with the man who can talk but does not know, with the result that the man who knows usually gets defeated in argument and things are done which his instinct tells him are bad."***[1]

In insisting that politicians were too prone to place the interests of their party before those of their country Robertson was being blind to the problems that ministers in a parliamentary democracy faced in waging war. Ultimately they had to be able to carry their people with them. The cost of not doing so was shown all too clearly by what happened in Russia. By February 1917 the Czarist regime had so forfeited public support that Russia collapsed into chaos and revolution. But determining just what was and was not acceptable to the British public was never likely to be an easy task. The First World War took place before the invention of public opinion polls. By August 1914 Parliament's electoral mandate was already nearly four years old, and in normal circumstances there would have been a general election no later than December 1915. That was postponed following the formation of the first wartime coalition government in May 1915, but it meant that politicians were increasingly out of touch with what their voters wanted. They had, therefore, perforce to rely upon the press as an intermediary between themselves and their public. But the British press was highly politicised and was therefore never likely to be a neutral source of information about the hopes, wishes and fears of the British people.

It was not surprising, therefore, that Asquith and some of his ministers were sometimes hesitant to take rapid and decisive action over big issues, such as the introduction of military conscription in the winter and spring of 1915 - 16, lest they find their decisions repudiated by the very people they were claiming to lead. This became a persistent bone of contention between the politicians and the army. By the time Lloyd George became Prime Minister the distribution of manpower between the armed services on the one hand and essential civilian needs had become the most significant flash point in civil-military relations. Lloyd George recognized that a balance had to be struck between their competing demands, but it was one of his greatest failures as a war leader that he never persuaded his military colleagues of that fact. Robertson for his part avoided these hard issues by fulminating at the War Cabinet's apparent lack of moral courage when his demands for still more men were not met.

It was the service professionals' claim to possess expertise which the politicians had no right to question which lay at the root of much of the tension in civil-military relations. It was the absence of sufficient mutual respect between so many of them, especially during the Lloyd George regime, which made those tensions so difficult to resolve. One reason why senior officers were able to wield so much power in the early and middle years of the war was because a powerful body of politicians within both the Asquith and Lloyd George governments were willing to defer to them. These ministers believed that although the Cabinet must be responsible for all acts of the executive, including those of the armed services, it would be disastrous if they tried to control the details of naval and military proceedings. The fiascos of the Dardanelles and Mesopotamian campaigns in 1915-16, both widely believed to have been conceived by the politicians despite the reservations of some of their professional advisers, seemed to show they were right. But ultimately such a one-sided relationship could not be sustained. The huge losses the army suffered on the Western Front in 1916-17 so eroded Robertson's prestige that Lloyd George was finally able to sack him in February 1918.

It would be wrong to argue that the appointment of his successor, Sir Henry Wilson, marked a complete break with what had gone before, or that a new and totally harmonious understanding now reigned between the professionals and their political masters. Wilson shared Robertson's low opinion of the tendency of politicians to do the popular, rather than the right thing. But his relations with Lloyd George were better than those the Prime Minister had enjoyed with Robertson. Wilson's quick-wittedness appealed to the Prime Minister, and at last he had found a soldier who was willing to argue with him on the basis of equality. Consequently, the two men could develop a working relationship of sorts in the closing months of the war.

Making War with the Allies

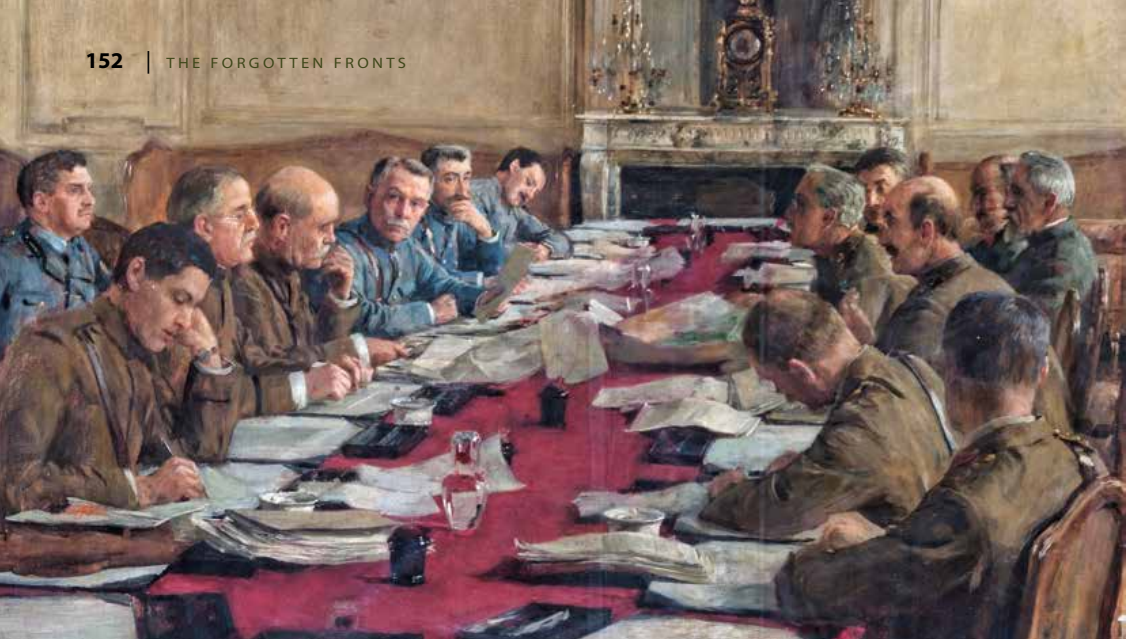
Britain's relations with her allies during the First World War were characterized by the same competitive-co-operation that distinguished her relations with her allies in the Second World War. Britain may have been at war with the Central Powers and her policy-makers recognized that collaboration with her allies was vital to defeat their common enemies. But they remained almost as suspicious of the long-term aspirations of their allies as they did of the war aims of their enemies. This was because most policy-makers had grown to maturity in the final decades of the nineteenth century in a world in which France and Russia were Britain's most dangerous imperial competitors. Germany only came to overtake them after 1900. Consequently, when British policymakers looked forward to the end of the war they hoped for a peace settlement which would not only safeguard Britain against Germany's ambitions, but which would also ensure that neither France nor Russia could upset the European balance of power or endanger the security of the British empire. Had the strategy of 'business as usual' devised by the Liberal government and Kitchener, proven to be practicable, it might have delivered

13.5 General Luigi Cadorna, the Italian Commander-in-Chief, arriving at Calais, greeted by General Joseph Joffre, the French Commander-in-Chief. March 1916 © IWM

just such an outcome. The war could have ended in 1917, and the British would have been able to dominate the peace conference. But it was not practicable. The military setbacks suffered by France and Russia in 1915 made in all too clear that they would not be able to fight the war without large-scale British assistance on land. 1917, far from marking the climax of their successful strategy, instead saw the collapse of Tsarist Russia, a series of mutinies that temporarily paralysed the French army, and the crushing defeat of the Italian army at Caporetto, not to mention the inroads that the German submarine offensive made into Britain's economic staying-power. The only bright spot was the entry of the USA into the war in April 1917, although it soon became apparent that the Americans were so ill-prepared that they would not be able to make their full weight felt on the Western Front until 1919.

13.6 The German U-boat SM U-35 stopping an Allied steamer, 1917 © IWM

This gave the issue of inter-allied co-ordination a peculiar delicacy. Until 1916 the British were the weakest land-power of the three major allies. They were, therefore, reluctant to take the initiative in pressing for the development of elaborate means to co-ordinate allied strategy in case it gave the French and Russians a lever with which to command Britain's resources. Even so, by Christmas 1914 it was apparent that the war would not be over quickly and the War Council understood that the three major allies would have to confer to concert their future plans. Their basic aim was simple: to find a plan that would compel their enemies to stretch their reserves by attacking simultaneously. In the first year of the war they were content to rely upon traditional diplomatic channels, supplemented by periodic meetings between the French Commander-in-Chief, General Joseph Joffre, and the commander of the BEF, Sir John French, to achieve strategic co-operation. The only major departure from this model was the despatch by



13.7 The interior of a large room at Versailles in which a meeting of the Supreme War Council is taking place - Herbert Olivier © IWM

the War Office of Military Missions sent to allied headquarters and charged with exchanging information between the general staffs about operational matters and intelligence.

It was not until July 1915 that the first Prime Ministerial summit conference took place when Asquith went to Calais to meet his French counterpart. This first meeting was so badly organized that no secretary was present to record its conclusions, with the result that the French believed that the British had agreed to a major offensive on the Western Front in the summer, whilst the British believed that the French had agreed that the British should make their main effort at the Dardanelles. Subsequent Anglo-French meetings were better organized, although problems of communication and distance meant that there was never a conference at Prime Ministerial level with the Russians. Kitchener was sent to Russia in June 1916, but was drowned when the cruiser taking him there was sunk by a German mine. The closest that the allies came to organising a genuinely high-level inter-allied conference took place in Petrograd in February 1917, a meeting at which the British were represented by a War Cabinet Minister, Lord Milner. It achieved very little, not least because plans to concert operations with the Russians were quickly upset by the revolutions which toppled the Czar.

13.8 HMS HAMPSHIRE. Struck a mine and sank off the Shetlands on 5 June 1916 while carrying Lord Kitchener and his staff to Russia © IWM

Between 1915 and 1917 inter-allied Prime Ministerial conferences were held at irregular intervals to discuss particular issues when they arose. But some officials engaged in inter-allied liaison work had recognized as early as the autumn of 1915 that real unity of purpose would not be achieved until the allies developed a permanent inter-allied council to co-ordinate their political and military policies. Even so, it was not until November 1917 that inter-allied summit conferences were placed upon a more regular footing. The series of setbacks that the allies had suffered in 1917, culminating with the collapse of a large part of the Italian army at Caporetto, coupled with the realisation that they could not expect large-scale American military support until 1919, persuaded allied leaders that if they were not to lose the war in 1918 they would have to coordinate their policies and resources far more effectively than in the past. They hoped to do this with the establishment of the Supreme War Council and its Permanent Military Representatives. The Supreme War Council's influence over the Entente's military strategy reached its apogee in February 1918. It endorsed Lloyd George's strategy that the allies should remain on the defensive in the west in 1918 in expectation of the arrival of a large American army for a final campaign against Germany in 1919, and that in the meantime they should knock-out Turkey. But it was the near success of the German spring offensive that began in March 1918 that did far more than the resolutions of the Supreme War Council to impose unity of command on the Western Front. In April the French General Ferdinand Foch was appointed as the allied generalissimo with responsibility for coordinating military operations on a front stretching from the North Sea coast of Belgium, across France, and down to Italy.

Conclusion

In November 1915 Robertson wrote to his predecessor as CIGS, Sir Archibald Murray, that "War', is a one-man show, and that it is quite impossible for you or anyone else to conduct this war unless you are allowed to conduct it in your own way.'[2] If the experiences of 1914-18 demonstrated anything it was that the conduct of a coalition war in the industrial age could not be a 'one-man show'. It was simply beyond the abilities of any single man to analyse the whole range of information available to the government and to weigh all of the difficult choices it faced. By building on some slender pre-war foundations, combined with much trial and error, by 1918 the British had created a system of committees and ministries capable of dealing with such problems with reasonable rapidity. Lloyd George and his acolytes could justifiably claim some of the credit for this success, although it would be wrong to overlook the fact that they were building upon the experiences of their Asquithian predecessors.

But any history of civil-military relations during the First World War runs the risk of placing too much emphasis on the formal machinery of government, and too little on the personalities of the men who ran it. Changes in the machinery of the state did not inevitably produce a different culture of government, one which prized harmony in civil-military relations or inter-allied co-operation above the pursuit of narrower political, service or national goals. In 1914 the services thought they ought to be permitted to conduct the war free of civilian interference and most politicians agreed. They equally readily accepted that the war could be won in association with, rather than in co-operation with their allies. But by 1916, even before the formation of the Lloyd George government, some politicians and professionals saw that the political, economic, diplomatic, military and naval ramifications of the war had cut across so many national, administrative and professional boundaries that co-operation would have to take the place of association both within the machinery of British government and between Britain and her allies. War was too serious a business to be left to either the politicians or the generals and admirals. Devising a practicable and realistic strategic policy ultimately depended on all parties finding ways in which they could co-operate effectively, and then finding ways to harmonise their own aims and means with those of their allies.

13.9 The arrival of Marshal Ferdinand Foch and General Maxime Weygand at the British Fourth Army HQ at Flixecourt to meet George V, 12 August 1918 © IWM

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2. Robertson to Murray, 30 November 1915. Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London. Robertson mss I/15/7.

14.1 Winston Churchill, 1920, Secretary of State for War and Air

14. An Introduction to the Legacies - The Wars after the War

Professor William Philpott

The Key Event: The Capture of Jerusalem and Baghdad

In his prime-ministerial address to the House of Commons in December 1917 David Lloyd George summarised what he judged to have been a momentous year in world affairs. Although the war in Europe was not yet over, was indeed just reaching its most intensive phase, the Prime Minister was confident of victory. He was also well aware that the world the war was making would be very different to the Euro-centric, capitalist, imperialist one that had turned on itself only three years before. He speculated on the events of that year that would still be of significance one hundred years later: Russia's revolutions; the advent of the United States into world politics; the setting up of the Versailles Supreme War Council (an allied inter-governmental war management machinery); the emancipation of the Arabs, 'one of the most gifted races in the world', from the Turks. Lloyd George was witnessing the birth of the modern world in 1917, as it crossed the geopolitical fault line that separated a century of imperialistic 'Pax Britannica' from the confrontational and unstable post-imperial world system. American hegemony and Russian rivalry would define geopolitics for the rest of the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries. Lloyd George singled out the captures of Baghdad and Jerusalem by imperial forces as the war's key events that year, unaware that these Middle Eastern cities would still be flash points of world politics a century later. The legacies of the First World War were to be far-ranging and long-lasting.

For more than two centuries, Britain had been a global state with European interests. A year after Lloyd George's speech the war would be over, but even before then the British Army would be reverting to its imperial role. While Britain's first mass citizen army had been assisting her short-term allies to defeat Germany with the aim of restoring some sort of balance of power on the continent, wider imperial concerns had resurfaced: strategy since Lloyd George assumed the premiership in December 1916 had had to balance defeating Germany in France and Flanders with ensuring British security elsewhere. As well as securing the North-West Frontier of India as always - there would be a third war with Afghanistan in 1919 - in 1918 British imperial forces were to be found on the periphery of Russia (at Murmansk and in the Caucasus and the Trans-Caspian region); in the Balkans; in northern Italy; in East Africa: in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq); in Palestine and Syria; maintaining order in a restless Ireland; and at the end of that year in Germany too as an army of occupation entered the Rhineland. The British Army's diverse twentieth-century deployments - counter-insurgencies, peace keeping and peace support missions as they would now be categorised - were set.

The Paris Peace Conference

In the Paris Peace Conference that lasted for much of 1919 and 1920 the victorious powers discussed, and frequently contested, the terms to impose on their beaten enemies: the German plenipotentiaries were summoned to Versailles to receive peace conditions, not to negotiate them. Events unfolding in Europe and the Middle East made peace-making a protracted and uncertain affair, often reactive rather than pre-emptive. The peacemakers' remit did not extend into all territories, while new forces were also at work. Eastern Europe was a battleground in which newly emancipated peoples fought to establish the borders of new states. Poland, Italy, Rumania, Greece and newly-born Yugoslavia (in effect 'greater Serbia') were expansionist; Germany, Turkey and Hungary fought to keep them at bay. Russia was in a state of civil war between Red Bolsheviks and Whites of various allegiances, and had no representatives (of any faction) in Paris. Older powers took an interest in such small wars for reasons of security and influence.

It was already clear that the Great War was not, as had been hoped, the war to end war. It spawned domestic and international legacy conflicts that were to rumble on into the 1920s, and thereafter to lie dormant until they would provoke another world war within a generation. While statesmen and diplomats were conducting formal peace negotiations, victors and vanquished remained at war, with themselves and among themselves: the immediate post-war years were a time for settling scores and grabbing spoils. The war had toppled four vast autocratic empires, leaving much to fight over. Notwithstanding the liberal American-inspired rhetoric of building a 'League of Nations' operating on the principle of 'collective security', victors wanted their just rewards in treasure and territory, and imperialistic states that had been recently engaged in a prolonged and bloody conflict had no problem with taking up arms to secure them. In the years after 1918 Lenin's Bolshevism, (which in 1919 redefined itself as international Communism) would fight for survival before trying and failing to push its ideology beyond Russia's old imperial borders, thereafter subsiding into brooding menace on Europe's eastern and Asia's northern borders; still-powerful Germany would hold her own in Central Europe but establish her new democracy on very shaky foundations; Italian democracy would collapse in post-war dudgeon; France would push her weight around in a quest for future security; America would decline to take up the international role to which her global power now entitled her; and the British Empire would appear supreme just as the early cracks in that nineteenth-century superpower were starting to show.

As the twenty-first century's wars have also demonstrated, pacification at the end of a war was also a matter of building some sort of domestic political and social consensus. Given the myriad

groups whose colourful uniforms, banners and shirts - red, white, green, brown, black or horizon blue - defined their allegiance or ambitions in the rainbow world of newly democratised post-war mass politics, this would not be straightforward. New ideologies that were abroad or arising would give Europe's internal conflicts a 'class war' dimension. In the Middle East issues were imperial in nature as the long-standing 'eastern question' was, if not answered, at least rearticulated with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Territorial spoils in the Gulf and the Levant were partitioned among the victors, with the British Empire as usual taking the lion's share, but it would take time to establish the authority of new colonial overlords.

Revolution

Even while the First Word War moved towards an uncertain end, events in Russia foreshadowed the political dynamic that would characterise the post-war world. During 1917 two revolutions in quick succession had toppled Nicholas II's tsarist autocracy, introduced a short-lived experiment in democracy and finally handed power to a radical left-wing Bolshevik government. Lenin's regime preached an end to the world war by means of world revolution on behalf of the working class, declared war on Russia's bourgeoisie, and did all it could to hang on to power in Russia itself as German armies advanced eastwards. In 1918 this was a complication for the allies due to its impact on the strategic geography of the war, more than for its political significance. Nobody expected the Bolshevik government to survive for very long against its many opponents, but as Russia dissolved into a state of anarchy the eastern front, an essential element of allied strategy against the Central Powers, was collapsing. For Britain a German empire in Eastern Europe was a real threat, not least because it opened an overland route to India and the Middle East. Even while allied armies were defeating the Germans on the Western Front, during 1918 Lloyd George's attention was drawn eastwards. Anti-Bolshevik White Russian groups were to be backed with money, war material and military advice in the hope that they would defeat the Reds and establish a solid front against Germany in the east. British forces would deploy to Russia to protect British interests there - in small numbers since most were already engaged against Germany and Turkey. As it turned out the war was won in the west before the threat in the east materialised.

Battle lines were already being drawn up for the coming Cold War, intermixed with pre-existing British security interests as the 'Great Game' between the Empire and Russia for influence in the Persian Gulf and Central Asia continued. Although Chief of the Imperial General Staff Sir Henry Wilson identified as war ended that 'our real danger now is not the Boche but Bolshevism', there was little support for an all-out war against Red Russia, not least because a 'bolshie' mood was affecting the rank and file of the British Army who were anxious for demobilisation. In consequence a policy of helping anti-Red forces by proxy, while limiting active British military involvement, was adopted. But British policy was as confused as the political situation in post-imperial Russia. As armistices were signed with the various defeated Central Powers, in autumn 1918 British troops were to be found in north Russia at Archangel and Murmansk, with the objectives of securing allied war stores landed in the those ports and supporting the Red forces against the Germans and Finns, having actually been invited in by Leon Trotsky, the Bolsheviks' Commissar for War. In the Caucasus and Trans Caspian region scattered Anglo-Indian detachments were deployed (including a Royal Navy flotilla on the Caspian Sea!), although their purpose was unclear - were they supporting friendly regimes, opposing Bolshevik expansion or defending Persian oil fields or India's frontiers - and their maintenance was becoming increasingly problematic.

By spring 1919 international Communism had shown it true colours. Repression and terror (by both sides) plunged Russia and the imperial successor 'states' struggling for independence into near anarchy - Kiev, Ukraine's capital, was to change hands fifteen times between 1918 and 1921. Across Europe, socialist parties split over whether to subscribe to party rules prescribed by the newly founded Third International, the Comintern. Those that did were prepared to take up arms to fight in the streets for workers' power. British policy in Russia was at a crossroads. A few militant right-wing politicians, prominent among them Secretary of State for War and Air Winston Churchill, called for active support to the White armies that were mustering around the Red heartland of Russia. Others, such as Foreign Secretary George Curzon, thought that it was best to construct a 'cordon sanitaire' of friendly states around Red Russia, since Britain had few troops with which to fight after demobilisation and the mood at home suggested the army might be needed there to confront workers' unrest.

During the course of 1919 allied intervention in the Caucasus and the Black Sea was liquidated with some chaos as Red armies pushed southwards to consolidate their power. British troops left Baku on the Caspian Sea in August, and by the end of the year only one small garrison remained, at Batoum on the Black Sea. In the north the isolated and demoralised British force was to be succoured: a North Russia Relief Force of two brigades of volunteers raised from regular troops and ex-servicemen was organised and despatched in early summer. 'Mission creep' ensued as elements of the relief force, pushed inland to cover an evacuation, became actively engaged with Red army units. Active intervention in Russia proved divisive at home, and as diplomatic relations with the Bolsheviks normalised and White Russian forces were defeated the North Russia expedition was wound up. The demoralised troops were evacuated in September. The North Russian experience suggested that active intervention in foreign wars was problematic. Britain would maintain a degree of diplomatic leverage as the troubled continent settled down, but her wars against Communism would be fought by proxy in future. Her soldiers turned their attention to more familiar pacification missions within the Empire.

Europe

After 1918 Britain remained aligned diplomatically with her victorious allies, if often pursuing different policy aims. France wanted security, Italy territory, and America prosperity and peace. British statesmen wanted to restore a balance of power in Europe, withdraw from continental commitments and revert to being an imperial power rather than a European makeweight. Yet France sought an Anglo-Saxon security guarantee - an alliance with Britain and the United States to contain any threat of German resurgence. While this was accepted with reservations by Lloyd George, because it would align Britain closely with the United States and act as a restraint on France in her dealings with Germany, it was to be rejected by Congress. This left Europe with an untried and exclusive League of Nations collective security apparatus without American participation to keep the peace. Unsurprisingly, France chose to rely on old-fashioned diplomacy as well, rebuilding an alliance cordon with states in Eastern Europe, Poland and Rumania in particular, to replace her former Russian makeweight to Germany. Germany was also to be weakened with treaty limitations on her armed forces and to suffer an army of occupation in the Rhineland to ensure that treaty terms were observed and financial reparations paid.

General Sir Herbert Plumer's Second Army of ten divisions had marched into the Rhineland on 1 December 1918 under the terms of the armistice with Germany. To show the British were in charge, Greenwich Mean Time was introduced. The presence of British forces was welcomed by the local German population, not least as an insurance against Bolshevik-inspired disturbances. Although until peace was signed the zone remained under martial law, some of the harsher terms of the armistice were relaxed under British administration, with food supplies improving under British military management. After the Treaty of Versailles was signed in June 1919 the government wished to reduce this costly commitment. Under the auspices of the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission a much reduced British occupation force, administered from Cologne, would remain in Germany until December 1929. Under Plumer's successors the army of occupation (in actual size smaller than a division) took on the characteristics of a typical overseas garrison. It was an army of observation, similar to the one that would control the British sector of Germany after the Second World War, although the unconditional terms of surrender made that an army in total occupation. The British looked on when French and Belgian troops occupied the Ruhr industrial district in January 1923 in an attempt to force Germany to meet reparations payments (although British troops did guard the railways along which the French occupying forces travelled). The outcome was financial chaos in Germany which rippled across Europe. By the time the Ruhr occupation ended in July 1925 Britain had had its first Labour government and the mood of post-war diplomacy was finally starting to turn from one of punishing the defeated to collaborating to reduce international tensions.

Europe had had a difficult and violent adjustment to peace. The civil war that broke out in Germany once it was realised that the war was lost rippled eastwards and southwards, with the flames of domestic violence fanned by Communist agitators anxious to seize their opportunity. It turned out that the vision of a Europe-wide proletarian revolution was premature, but for more than two years the forces of the radical right and revolutionary left would fight each other and the state in Germany, Italy, Spain and the Habsburg successor states, while democrats, the real winners from wartime domestic political realignment, tried to build consensus between the political extremes. This involved some fateful political and social compromises that would rebound on Europe come the 1930s.

In Germany the Kaiser and his military leaders had tried to pass responsibility for defeat onto social democratic politicians, thereby manufacturing a potent myth that Germany had been 'stabbed in the back'. In the short term the stratagem failed, the Kaiser was dethroned and a republic declared while armistice negotiations were ongoing. But to deal with domestic unrest - workers', soldiers' and sailors' councils on the Soviet model were springing up all over Germany as the imperial regime collapsed - the new Weimar Republic's frightened leaders would make a fateful compromise with the army and the imperial civil service, whose employees retained their posts. By the terms of a hasty pact agreed between Social Democratic Party leader and acting head of state Freidrich Ebert and army deputy chief of staff Wilhelm Groener on 10 November 1918, the army confirmed its loyalty to the new regime in return for government action against the soldiers' and workers' councils. Once Germany's democratic left sided with the conservative right against Communist insurrection, counter-revolutionary violence would become commonplace on the streets of Berlin and Germany's other big cities. Para-military forces, the 'Freikorps', were mobilised from ex-soldiers and young nationalist radicals who had not seen combat, to be deployed against left-wing domestic enemies and foreign aggressors. Freikorps units assisted the army in brutally putting down the 'Spartacist' uprising in Berlin in January 1919, murdering revolutionary socialist leaders Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in the process. In Munich in April a Bavarian Socialist Republic was declared - simultaneously Communist movements were handed power in Hungary, and pushing for control in Austria. Again order was restored by force after bloody street fighting. In Bavaria the radical right responded with a mass party of its own, the German National Socialist Worker's Party, determined to oppose what it saw as a 'Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy' against the Aryan race. A small fringe movement in 1919, during the 1920s under the leadership of ex-soldier Adolf Hitler the Nazis were to move inexorably to the foreground of German politics against a background of economic instability, nationalist resentment of the humiliating defeat, and weak Weimar democracy.

Events in Germany were typical of those in other states, and everywhere, except Russia, Communism was ultimately contained. Bela Kun's short-lived communist regime in Hungary from March to August 1919 was to be ended by the intervention of the Rumanian army, acting with the sanction of the Paris peacemakers but also in the interest of Rumanian expansionism. It was followed by a period of army-sanctioned White Terror against the state's revolutionary left, and in March 1920 Admiral Miklós Horthy, formerly commander of the Austro-Hungarian navy and post-war Hungarian army, assumed the powers of 'regent for life' as head of an authoritarian conservative government. The rump state of Hungary that signed the Treaty of Trianon with the allies in June 1920 lost 72 per cent of its pre-1914 territory to Rumania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

In Austria the socialists were too weak and divided among themselves to take power. An uneasy liberal-Catholic coalition government was established, but the political standoff between 'Red Vienna' and Austria's Catholic conservative hinterland persisted into the 1930s. Only in Czechoslovakia, where the

fledgling democracy was grounded in major land reform giving the new state a solid social foundation among the rural peasantry, would the principles of liberalism take hold in Eastern Europe. It would be the last Eastern European democracy to fall to dictatorship in the 1930s, and only then as the victim of Nazi aggression.

Poland managed to re-establish itself in the post-war Eastern European power vacuum, but not without a fight. Partitioned since the 1790s, Poland had a proud history and strong international support, as well as an army cobbled together from the ranks of former Habsburg, German and Russian forces. It also had a dynamic populist leader in the person of left-wing revolutionary turned right-wing patriot Marshal Josef Pilsudski. Poles would fight for their heritage; and France, who saw Poland as her new Eastern European makeweight to Germany in place of Russia, would support them, sending a large military mission to train the new Polish army. In 1919 the Poles fought a series of border wars against Germans, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Czechs, and Russians as Pilsudski, commander in chief and soon to be head of state, struggled to establish the new boundaries of Polish territory. Britain hoped to settle the most dangerous of these border wars diplomatically. The 'Curzon line' (named after the British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon) was proposed as the border between Poland and Russia. In Silesia and East Prussia plebiscites authorised by the Treaty of Versailles and backed by the League of Nations were held to determine the borders between Poland and Germany. The Treaty also enabled the Allied and Associated Powers to appoint Commissions to administer these territories.

The Soviets would have none of it. Buoyed by victories over the Whites in 1919, in spring 1920 Lenin and Trotsky sent the Red Army westwards to repulse the Polish advance into the Ukraine. As Soviet propaganda posters declared, Poland was the bridge across which world revolution would pass to support Communist revolutionaries in Central Europe (who by that point were largely subdued). By August General Mikhail Tukhachevsky's forces had driven Polish forces back to the outskirts of Warsaw. The Poles took up defensive positions along the River Vistula. Patriotism was to triumph over socialism: rather than taking up arms against the bourgeoisie, Polish workers joined militia battalions to defend their new state. The resulting 'miracle of the Vistula' was a test as much of the lessons of the Western Front as it was of patriotism. The Polish army trained in modern combined-arms methods and operational manoeuvre by the French military mission (supplemented at the moment of crisis by an Anglo-French mission led by Western Front victor Marshal Ferdinand Foch's chief of Staff Maxime Weygand) was able to halt the onrush of the highly ideologically motivated but poorly coordinated Red Army forces, before surprising them with a sudden violent flanking manoeuvre and forcing their retreat back to the Ukraine. The Battle of Warsaw proved a decisive engagement of the nascent Cold War. Although Soviet forces would get beyond the Vistula in 1945, they would do so as makeshift allies, not revolutionary rivals, of Britain and her allies.

The Mediterranean

The Mediterranean was also in turmoil. The region remained vital for British security as it was the direct sea communications route to the Middle East and India. Britain could do nothing but look on as Spain passed through a revolutionary situation towards a proto-fascist military regime headed by General Miguel Primo de Rivera, and Italian democracy also collapsed. Ultimately Italy had done well in the war, but was to do badly at the peace. There would be border disputes with Yugoslavia, as well as socialist agitation at home that undermined the legitimacy of the liberal government that seemed to have negotiated away Italy's wartime gains in Paris, losing it support from the right as well. A new dynamic radical right-wing movement emerged, led by ex-soldier and former left-wing journalist Benito Mussolini. Mussolini's black-shirted Fascists stirred up trouble at home with their violent attacks on the left, and promoted Italian expansionism abroad. By 1922, with no viable alternative, the King was forced to make Mussolini prime minister: he promised to restore peace in Italy, a peace which his own thugs had largely been responsible for destroying. The coming to power of 'Il Duce' ('the leader') was proof that the anti-democratic nationalist right were more likely to benefit from post-war domestic turmoil than the revolutionary left.

In the Eastern Mediterranean Greece was playing the role of Rumania, seeking territory at Turkey's expense. At the end of the war Britain deployed troops to Constantinople as part of an Allied occupation force pending a settlement with Turkey: the Straits were too valuable to let any single state have free rein. Lloyd George and Curzon were prepared to accede control of the Straits (which before the revolution had actually been promised to Russia) to the Greeks although the Cabinet demurred. From May 1919 Greek forces were actively engaged in Asia Minor against the Kemalists and pressing their claims to Turkish territory, (some of which had also been promised to Italy) including the Dodecanese Islands. Turkish nationalists inspired by Mustapha Kemal, 'Atatürk', were actively resisting. It took two peace treaties and the expulsion of the Greek population from Asia Minor by the Kemalists before the region was finally pacified; and not before the British garrison nearly came to blows in September 1922 with the Turkish nationalists at Chanak in Western Anatolia, the event which finally toppled Lloyd George's ministry.

Beyond Europe

As the war came to an end General Sir Henry Rawlinson, whose Fourth Army had begun the advance to victory at Amiens on 8 August 1918, asserted: 'I never thought we could bring down the Boche Empire so quickly… It is really wonderful - we have now secured for the Empire a really firm foundation on which to build.' As events in Asia Minor demonstrated, however, the shifting sands of the Middle East would make the post-war empire increasingly precarious. In empire building possession counts for much, and in 1919 British armies were deployed throughout the former Ottoman Empire. Yet the parameters of empire were changing. So as part of the peace settlement League of Nations mandates granting temporary authority, as the Arab regions were prepared for independence, substituted for formal colonies in Palestine, Transjordan and Mesopotamia. The British

Empire had reached its greatest territorial extent, just as it was facing the onset of imperial crisis. Local populations no longer wished to be ruled by the British and at the same time the British could not afford to maintain the military garrisons required to maintain order without local goodwill. Churchill experimented with using air power to control tribal rebels in Mesopotamia: the British were the first foreign power to drop bombs in Iraq during the 1920 Iraqi revolt against the imposition of colonial rule.

Since America's remit did not really reach into the Middle East, (The United States never declared war on the Turkish Empire) old fashioned imperial diplomacy founded in wartime bargaining such as the Sykes-Picot agreement between Britain and France over spheres of influence in the post-war Middle East would determine the territorial rearrangement of the region. What turned out to be a relatively short imposition of European-style administration of only a few decades could not eradicate deep ethnic and religious divisions that dated back centuries. Local opposition to the new occupier was expressed in old and new forms. Pan-Islamist opposition to British rule had a well-established nineteenth century pedigree: Mahdist jihad in the Sudan had plagued the empire intermittently since the 1880s and had broken out most recently in 1916. Militant Islam was believed to be behind many of the insurgencies that burst out in the post-war empire, inspired some thought by Kemalist nationalism. Other groups felt that their participation in the Empire's war effort ought to be rewarded with greater political freedom. In Egypt this amounted to a sustained nationalist campaign for independence which forced the British to concede self-government in 1922 (although Britain would remain the dominant external power in Egypt until after the Second World War). It was a sign of things to come in Britain's formerly Turkish territories. Moreover, other political decisions which seemed appropriate at the time, such as the 1917 Balfour declaration in support of Zionism and Jewish immigration into Palestine, were sowing the seeds of intractable conflicts that would persist long after the British Empire had been restyled into a Commonwealth.

At Home

Closer to home the kingdom was at stake. Striking workers were a feature of a fraught domestic political situation in the aftermath of war, as the government reverted to budgetary austerity and Treasury control in an attempt to restore the nation's finances after unrestrained wartime expenditure. Although on the mainland Britain did not face a revolutionary situation equivalent to that sweeping the continent, social unrest obliged the return of troops from overseas garrisons for reasons of national security. Across the Irish Sea the long-standing and fraught matter of Irish self-government was finally resolving itself with bloodshed. 'Home Rule', the devolutionary compromise put on the statute books on the outbreak of war in August 1914, was no longer enough to satisfy the bulk of Irish nationalist opinion that had become radicalised in the aftermath of 1916's abortive Easter rebellion. Against a background of vicious IRA attacks on British security forces including the local police and reprisals committed by the para-military auxiliary police, Ireland's independence was slowly negotiated. The establishment of the Irish Free State, in essence a Dominion of the Empire, was agreed in December 1921 and came into existence in 1922, only to plunge Ireland into civil war as left- and right-wing Irish nationalist factions fought between themselves over the nature of the new state.

Britain remained a great power in the immediate aftermath of the Great War. Indeed with her imperial territory reaching its greatest extent and some rivals, Germany and Russia in particular, temporarily weak, the Empire seemed to have emerged enhanced from its most strenuous and difficult war. Although the government could pursue an active policy, the seeds of imperial crisis and decline were being sown, while geo-political structures had shifted sharply from those of the nineteenth-century age of Victorian grandeur. As Lloyd George had recognised at the end of 1917, American had risen, Russia was powerful yet unpredictable and the Arab peoples were asserting themselves. His predictions for a century later proved remarkably percipient.

The army faced a peacetime dilemma familiar to British soldiers: 'Britain's services were too weak to support its foreign policy yet too expensive to suit its financial one.' A clear, consistent government strategic policy did not compensate. By the mid-1920s the services would be constrained by the 'Ten-year Rule' which set service budgets on the expectation that the Empire would not face a major war within the next decade. More conciliatory international politics gave this policy a certain legitimacy, but it trusted a lot to hope rather than experience. An uneasy truce would arise after the final peace treaty - a revised settlement with Turkey - was signed in Lausanne in July 1923. For a while more enlightened statesmen tried to make the League of Nations and collective security work, while disarmament was pursued. But come the 1930s and general global economic crisis undemocratic states would revert to the sort of confrontational, belligerent diplomacy that would bring on a second world war.

Communism in the Future

By 1921 Communism was turning in on itself as Lenin suspended the world revolution in order to build the socialist worker's state in bankrupt Russia. But the last act of Russia's brutal civil war was to be the bloody suppression of an uprising at the Krondstadt naval base near Petrograd, whose workers and sailors had been the most ardent supporters of the original Bolshevik coup, but who now rebelled against a Communist dictatorship worse than the tsarist regime it had replaced. The Soviet Union was taking its first steps towards Stalinism. It was doing so in collaboration with Germany, with whom the Soviets signed a treaty at Rapallo in 1922 normalising diplomatic and economic relations and paving the way for sharing military technologies and supporting clandestine German rearmament. In the 1930s these two powers would push Europe towards another world war which would break out in the disputed lands of Eastern Europe. France would need British military support against German aggression once again, but second time around it would be ill-prepared and half-heartedly given.

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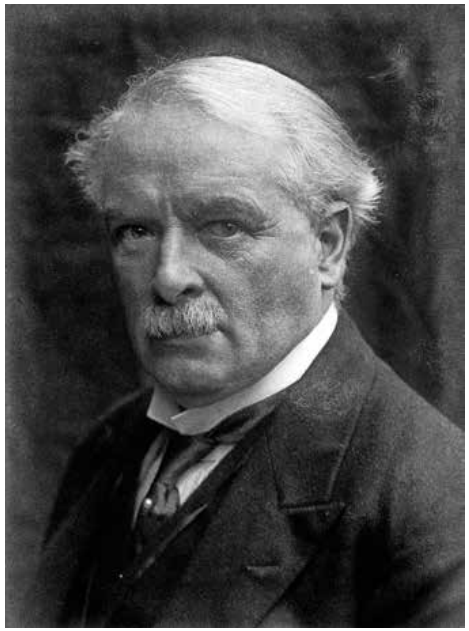
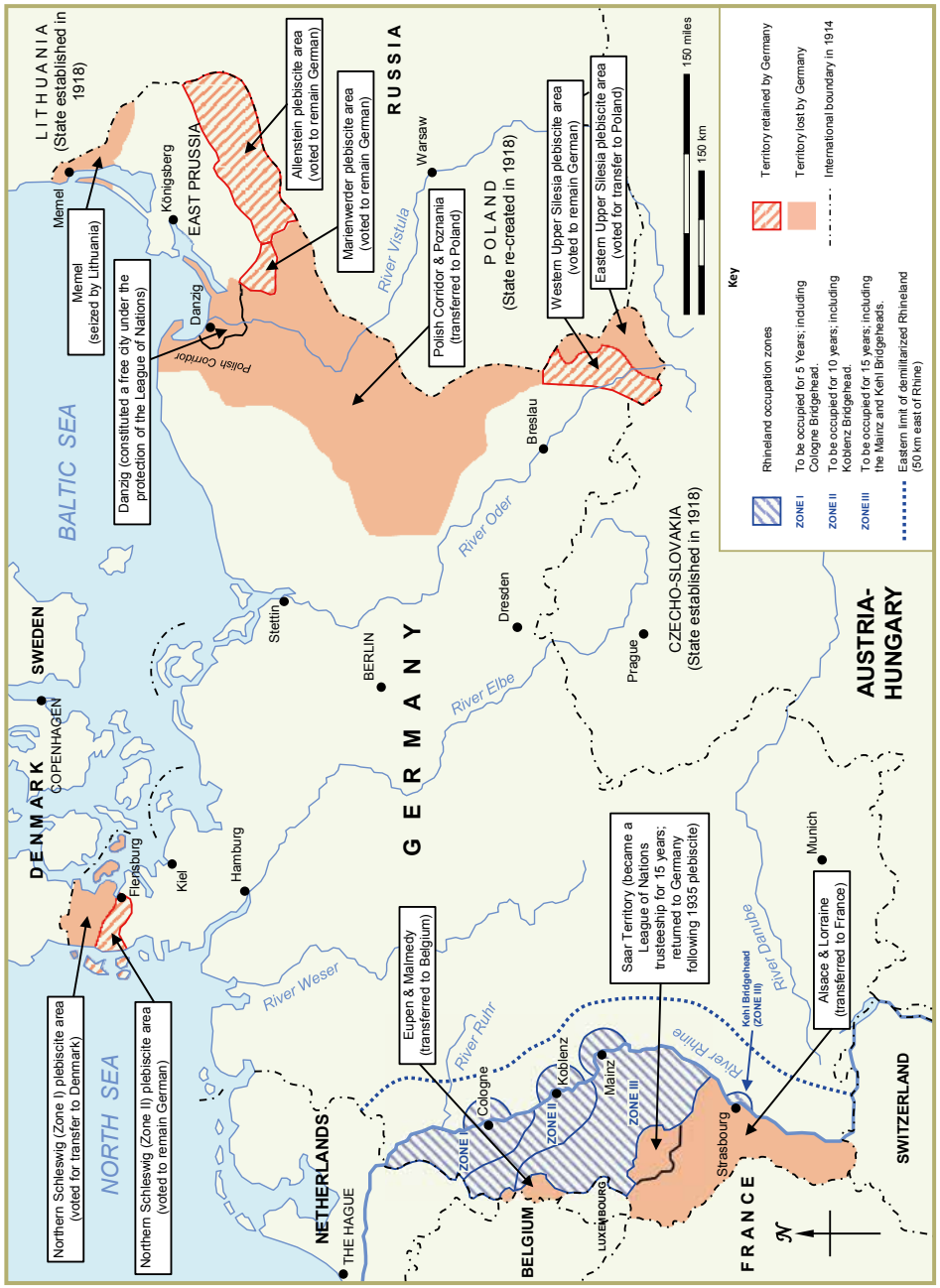


14.4 David Lloyd George by Walter Stoneman © NPG

14.3 President of the USA, Woodrow Wilson 1919 © US LoC

14.4 Lord Curzon, by John Cooke, after John Singer Sargent, 1914 © NPG



Map 15.1 German Territorial Losses After the Great War and Zones of Occupation in the Rhineland

15. The Occupation of Germany

Lieutenant Colonel Nick Weekes

Introduction

Allied armies, under the supreme command of Marshal Foch, crossed the German frontier on 1 December 1918 and proceeded to occupy the German territory specified in the Armistice Convention of 11 November 1918. The Convention laid down a phased timetable for the evacuation of German troops and the subsequent advance of the allied armies to occupy the entire left bank of the Rhine and bridgeheads of 30-kilometre radius on the right bank opposite Cologne, Koblenz and Mainz [See Map 15.1]. A smaller bridgehead around Kehl (opposite Strasbourg) was added to the occupied territory in January 1919. The immediate purpose of this occupation was to place the allies in an advantageous military position in the event of a resumption of hostilities.

The British contribution to the initial occupation of the Rhineland was provided by the 2nd Army under the command of General Sir Herbert Plumer. The 2nd Army was allocated the Cologne bridgehead and completed its occupation on 13 December 1918. At this time, the 2nd Army comprised eleven infantry divisions (organized into four corps) and a cavalry division and eighteen squadrons of the Royal Air Force were deployed in support. One of the corps was Canadian and there were smaller imperial contributions from Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland and South Africa. The total strength of the 2nd Army was nearly 275,000 officers and men.

15.1 General Herbert Plumer and General William Robertson on their handover as the C-in-C of the British Army of the Rhine, visiting the Rhine Flotilla © IWM

15.2 The first British car to cross the Hohenzollern bridge over the Rhine, Royal Army Service Corps (RASC), Cologne, December 1918 © IWM

General Plumer established his headquarters in Cologne in the Excelsior and Dom Hotels. His major concern was to maintain a credible military capability for a possible advance into unoccupied Germany despite increasing pressures from London for rapid demobilization. The early months of 1919 saw a major turnover in manpower as young soldiers from the United Kingdom replaced the veterans of the 2nd Army.

The interface with the German civil authorities was delegated to a Military Governor (initially Lieutenant General Sir Charles Fergusson). The occupation was established through a declaration of martial law and the subsequent issue of ordinances and instructions that affected many aspects of everyday life and were enforced by British military courts. Notwithstanding the imposition of curfews, censorship and many other restrictions, British military occupation was not entirely unwelcome. The presence of British troops spared Cologne from the revolutionary disorders that afflicted much of Germany after the Armistice and resulted in measures to exempt the occupied territory from the worst effects of the allied economic blockade. The German civil authorities remained in place under British control and supervision. It is of note that the lord mayor of Cologne at this time was Konrad Adenauer; he filled the same office in the aftermath of the Second World War until he was dismissed by the British Military Government and launched on a political career at the national level.

15.3 Officers of the 8th Battalion, King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment) discussing matters of the demobilization of the unit, Cologne, April 1919 © IWM

On 2 April 1919 the 2nd British Army was redesignated the British Army of the Rhine. General Plumer handed over command to General Sir William Robertson (formerly CIGS) later that month. May and June 1919 saw intensive activity in the Cologne bridgehead as contingency plans were revised and rehearsed for an advance into unoccupied Germany if Germany refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles. The Treaty was signed on 28 June 1919. Further military preparations took place later in 1919 against possible German non-ratification of the Treaty. The Treaty eventually came into force when it was ratified by Germany on 10 January 1920.

15.4 Major Arthur Bles, Town Major of Cologne © IWM

Plebiscites

The coming into force of the Treaty generated some British military commitments in Germany outside the Rhineland. The Treaty provided for plebiscites to be held in Schleswig, Allenstein, Marienwerder and Upper Silesia. [See Map 15.1] Germany was required to hand over the administration of the plebiscite areas to inter-allied commissions that would prepare for and conduct the plebiscites and then make recommendations on the future demarcation of the frontiers. Although it was hoped that the local police would be able to maintain order, it seemed prudent to deploy allied military contingents in support of the commissions.

15.5 Women of the Women's Royal Air Force in Cologne 19 May 1919 © IWM

Denmark had not been a belligerent in the Great War but she persuaded the allied powers to address a grievance arising from the annexation of Schleswig by Prussia in 1866. Accordingly the Treaty of Versailles provided that the future status of northern Schleswig (where significant numbers of the population were Danish speakers) should be determined by plebiscite. British, French, Norwegian and Swedish commissioners assumed responsibility for the plebiscite area in January 1920 and were supported by an allied contingent comprising the 1st Battalion The Sherwood Foresters, a French battalion and an Anglo-French naval task force.

The plebiscite area comprised two zones. Voting in Zone I (the northern zone) took place on 10 February 1920 and resulted in a majority of nearly 75% for union with Denmark. Voting in Zone II (that included Flensburg) took place on 14 March 1920; a majority of over 80% favoured remaining part of Germany. Zones I and II were then transferred to Danish and German sovereignty respectively, the inter-allied commission being dissolved on 15 June 1920 and the allied troops (who had not been involved in any serious interventions to maintain law and order) completing their withdrawal on the same day.

The Treaty of Versailles also provided that plebiscites should be held in Allenstein and Marienwerder. British, French, Italian and Japanese commissioners were appointed for each area and deployed in February 1920. The 1st Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment and an Italian battalion supported the inter-allied commission for Allenstein; the Marienwerder commission had an Italian military contingent in support reinforced with a few French troops and one company of the Royal Irish. The plebiscites in both areas were held on 11 July 1920 and resulted in overwhelming majorities in favour of remaining part of Germany. The two commissions were dissolved on 16 August 1920, the evacuation of allied troops being completed on the same day. As in northern Schleswig, the plebiscites passed off fairly peacefully.

The British army made no contribution in 1920 to the allied force that supported the inter-allied commission for the plebiscite area of Upper Silesia. The commission comprised, British, French and Italian commissioners, the French commissioner presiding. The allied military contingent comprised twelve French and three Italian battalions, some 13,000 men in all.

The Treaty of Versailles provided that Danzig [See Map 15.1] was to become a free city under the protection of the League of Nations. The 3rd Battalion The Royal Fusiliers and a French battalion were ordered to Danzig in January 1920 in support of a temporary allied administration responsible for overseeing the metamorphosis into free city status. This commitment lasted until December 1920.

Following the Treaty of Versailles

The coming into force of the Treaty of Versailles on 10 January 1920 had major implications in the Rhineland. Britain originally had no intention of being drawn into a peacetime military commitment in the Rhineland. However, British concern over French aspirations for the annexation or permanent military occupation of the left bank induced Lloyd George to agree to British participation in a 15-year occupation of the Rhineland as a guarantee for the execution of the Treaty by Germany. This compromise was reflected in the Treaty, which provided for continued occupation of the territory defined in the Armistice Convention. Evacuation of the occupied territory would be effected in three phases over 15 years, provided that Germany discharged her Treaty obligations (particularly those relating to disarmament and reparation). German failure to discharge her obligations might result in postponement of the evacuation programme or re-occupation of evacuated territory. The entire left bank of the Rhine and the right bank up to a line drawn 50 kilometres to the east of the river were to be demilitarized in perpetuity [see Map 15.1].

In Cologne, the contingency plans for the resumption of hostilities were now put away and the British Army of the Rhine was reorganized on a peacetime basis. By March 1920 it comprised seven infantry battalions (later increased to eight), one cavalry regiment, one tank company and supporting troops. Royal Air Force support was now reduced to one squadron (12 Squadron); this reduced further to a single flight later in 1920. The Royal Navy maintained a Rhine Flotilla of motor gunboats. The British area of occupation (which had originally comprised a swathe of territory from the frontier to the left bank and the entire Cologne bridgehead on the right bank) was now reduced to an area more appropriate to the new British force level [see Map 15.2]. The national areas of occupation were adjusted by mutual consent between the occupying powers (Belgium, Britain, France and the United States); neither the delimitation of the national areas nor the size of the national contingents was regulated by the Treaty. The Treaty required Germany to pay the costs of the occupation as a first charge on her assets and revenues (ie before payment of reparation).

The Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission

General Robertson handed over command to Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Morland on 3 March 1920. Until 10 January 1920, General Robertson had exercised authority in the British area as the commander of a belligerent army of occupation in accordance with the Fourth Hague Convention of 1907. His successor was to have less sweeping powers. A Rhineland Agreement, signed concurrently with the Treaty of Versailles, had emphasized the non-belligerent nature of the Treaty occupation by providing that supreme allied authority in the occupied territory would be exercised by a civilian Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission. This body, comprising a High Commissioner from each of the occupying powers (with the French High Commissioner being the permanent Chairman), established itself at Koblenz on 10 January 1920. The High Commission had the power to issue ordinances having the force of law to secure the maintenance, safety and requirements of the occupying forces.

15.6 German policeman and British military policeman outside the Cologne Cathedral, 24 April 1919 © IWM

These ordinances extended far beyond obvious measures necessary to counter subversion, espionage and sabotage. German civilians were prohibited from singing or playing their national anthem in the presence of allied troops, offering goods for sale to allied troops at prices higher than those demanded from Germans, owning wireless receivers (for fear that they might be subverted by broadcasts from unoccupied Germany) or violating licensing regulations on the sale of alcohol (thereby threatening the sobriety of the troops). Prostitutes posed a particular threat to the safety of the troops and were liable to deportation to unoccupied Germany; the deployment of six female officers from the Metropolitan Police to Cologne over the period July 1923 to March 1925 does not appear to have eliminated this threat. German officials who were uncooperative or obstructive were also liable to deportation. Censorship of mails, publications, theatre and cinema was maintained and strict control exercised over public meetings. Allied jurisdiction extended to Germans involved in motoring collisions with allied personnel.

As the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission lacked a police force and a judicial arm, the enforcement of its ordinances fell to the commanders-in-chief in their respective areas. Minor offences in the British area were dealt with by a British Summary Court, presided over by an officer with legal qualifications and supported by a similarly qualified prosecuting officer. The British Summary Court dealt with over 4,000 cases during its existence. Its procedures attracted significant interest and admiration from the German legal profession, members of which were allowed to act as defending officers. Specially convened military courts handled serious offences, operating in accordance with

Map 15.2 Areas of Occupation in the Rhineland 1920

15.7 German women near Dusseldorf entering a house to be searched by Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps Officers for contraband 1919 © IWM

the procedures applicable to courts martial. Sentences of imprisonment awarded by British courts were served in German prisons within the occupied territory.

British military police had a routine involvement in the enforcement of the ordinances of the High Commission. The Intelligence Corps, disbanded in the rest of the British Army after the Great War, continued in existence on the Rhine. It supported the occupation through counter-intelligence activities, censorship and the control of public meetings. It also had a role in monitoring activities inside unoccupied Germany. Other than the Corps of Military Police and the Intelligence Corps, the British Army of the Rhine had a limited interface with the civilian population. Apart from the obvious language barrier, a prohibition on the wearing of plain clothes off-duty (maintained throughout the occupation on the grounds that Germans offering or giving violence to soldiers might plead ignorance of the identity of their victims) did not encourage social intercourse. This policy was sometimes carried to ridiculous lengths; wives of British military personnel were, for a brief period, obliged to wear armbands proclaiming their status and officers playing golf had to combine the nether garments and footwear traditional to the sport with service dress jackets and caps. Middle class Germans were particularly reluctant to be seen in public in company with British officers in uniform, but such inhibitions were less prevalent among the working classes. Married personnel had the greatest opportunities to develop German social contacts as they were often billeted in German households. Notwithstanding official discouragements, some 700 marriages were contracted between British soldiers and German girls during the course of the occupation.

The British Army of the Rhine had no obvious operational role under the Treaty occupation beyond the maintenance of law and order if disturbances arose that could not be handled by the German police. Germany had neither the political inclination nor the military means to challenge the demilitarized status of the Rhineland. Throughout 1920 the British Army of the Rhine increasingly adjusted its routine to that of an ordinary peacetime garrison. The only major exception was the temporary return of two battalions to the United Kingdom in October 1920 for possible duties in aid of the civil power during a miners' strike. The reconstituted regular army faced severe overstretch at this time; the eight battalions maintained at German expense on the Rhine were viewed from London as a valuable reserve for commitments elsewhere.

Rhine Army Commitments

Overstretch was to have in 1921 a major effect on the Rhine Army. Although the British army had avoided involvement in Upper Silesia in 1920, four battalions were deployed there from the Rhineland in March 1921 to help the French and Italian troops maintain order during the plebiscite (voting taking place on 20 March 1921). These four battalions returned to the Rhineland in April 1921.

In March 1921 the Rhine Army was involved in the occupation of Düsseldorf. A German default in reparation payments resulted in an allied decision to place part of the unoccupied right bank (including Düsseldorf, Duisburg and Ruhrort) under military occupation. This venture was to be undertaken primarily by French and Belgian troops, but a token British contribution was required. Accordingly, on 8 March 1921, two British cavalry squadrons, four British tanks, the Rhine Flotilla and the remaining flight of 12 Squadron, Royal Air Force assisted in the occupation of Düsseldorf. The British were not involved in the subsequent military government of Düsseldorf and the rest of the area placed under military occupation; Franco-Belgian occupation of the area lasted until August 1925.

15.8 Officers of the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps at work in the permit office of the Deputy Provost Marshal in Cologne, circa 1919 © IWM

15.9 12th Battalion tank, serial number 9339, on the Rhine embankment near the Hohenzollern Bridge in Cologne, 22 May 1919 © IWM

The Rhine Army was involved in an associated initiative over the period April to September 1921 to offset the reparation default by establishing a customs barrier between unoccupied Germany and the occupied Rhineland. The customs barrier around the Cologne bridgehead became a British military responsibility, troops being assisted in this unusual task by 20 customs officers from the United Kingdom. The experience of the latter in operating on a land boundary was found to be of value on the establishment of the Irish Free State in the following year.

April 1921 also saw the despatch of four battalions (three of which had just returned from Upper Silesia) from the Rhineland to the United Kingdom in view of industrial unrest there. This left four battalions in the British Army of the Rhine. All four battalions and a further two battalions from the United Kingdom were ordered to Upper Silesia in May 1921 to constitute the British Upper Silesian Force. This Force was later augmented with two more battalions from the United Kingdom, bringing it to eight battalions.

With all of its eight infantry battalions deployed elsewhere, the residual Rhine Army struggled to meet its routine guard commitments. The French, who were maintaining over 100,000 men in their Rhineland occupation forces at this time, deployed an infantry brigade into the British area to offset the absence of the British battalions.

British Upper Silesian Force

The plebiscite in Upper Silesia on 20 March 1921 did not generate an obvious demarcation line between Poland and Germany and resulted in some serious fighting between Polish insurgents and German paramilitary forces with the Franco-Italian military contingent struggling to maintain the upper hand. The arrival of the British Upper Silesian Force in May and June 1921 helped to restore allied authority but the state of siege in the area was not lifted until September 1921.

The allied powers could not agree on the interpretation of the plebiscite results to arrive at a definitive international frontier and passed this challenge to the League of Nations. Although the League made its recommendations in October 1921, various complications delayed the division of the area between Germany and Poland [See Map 15.1] and the final evacuation of allied troops until July 1922.

15.10 Weighing and packing butter at the British Army dairy farm at Cologne, 12 February 1919 © IWM

Occupation Forces Activities

Command at Cologne passed to Lieutenant General Sir Alexander Godley on 8 March 1922. The end of the commitment in Upper Silesia in July 1922 permitted the reconstitution of the Rhine Army at the previous force level of eight battalions. The Royal Air Force presence was withdrawn entirely during 1922, being replaced by an arrangement under which a Belgian commercial air company was required to keep one aircraft available for military purposes at Cologne. The American military presence on the Rhine fell to 1,200 men during 1922 and was withdrawn completely in January 1923. The former American area was then occupied by French troops.

French troops moved in another direction in January 1923. Further German defaults in reparation payments prompted a Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr with the aim of seizing reparation in kind. The Ruhr valley as far east as Dortmund was placed under military occupation and coal stocks were confiscated for transportation to France and Belgium. The German population responded with a campaign of passive resistance. Passive resistance developed into riots, violence, fatalities and repressive martial law measures, including a large number of deportations to unoccupied Germany. As the removal of coal from the Ruhr depended on the Rhineland railway system, passive resistance spread to the Rhineland. The Ruhr and Rhineland railway systems were placed under Franco-Belgian administration. The French intensified their encouragement of separatist elements in the Rhineland, hoping that an independent or autonomous Rhenish state would emerge that would provide a long-term guarantee of the demilitarized status of the Rhineland.

Although Britain had reluctantly participated in the measures taken over the 1921 reparation default (the occupation of Düsseldorf, Duisburg and Ruhrort and the temporary establishment of the customs barrier), she refused to be associated with the invasion of the Ruhr. The British High Commissioner on the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission was instructed to abstain from voting on ordinances related to the Ruhr crisis and such ordinances were not enforced in the British area of occupation. Thus the German railway system around the key nodal point of Cologne remained under German administration and the British military authorities gave no encouragement to separatist activities. The Ruhr crisis had little effect on the British Army of the Rhine in terms of operational commitments; the political tensions that it created became evident in the increasingly pro-British sentiments expressed by many Germans in Cologne and in the increasingly reserved attitudes adopted by many French military contacts.

The Ruhr Crisis and the Dawes Plan

The Ruhr crisis was resolved through the Dawes Plan of 1924 (which subjected future payment of reparation to more sensible regulation) and the 1925 Locarno Treaty (which addressed Franco-German security issues and resulted in Germany's admission to the League of Nations in 1926). By August 1925 French and Belgian troops had evacuated both the Ruhr and the area of the right bank placed under military occupation in 1921 (Düsseldorf, Duisburg and Ruhrort). The Treaty of Versailles had contemplated the evacuation of Zone I of the Rhineland [See Map 15.1] by 10 January 1925 but disagreements over Germany's discharge of her disarmament obligations under the Treaty resulted in the evacuation being delayed until January 1926.

From the viewpoint of the British Treasury, January 1926 would have been a suitable moment to terminate British participation in the occupation of the Rhineland. The Dawes Plan allowed Germany to offset expenditure on occupation costs against her reparation liability; every mark that Germany could attribute to Rhine Army occupation costs would now reduce the potential reparation receipts in London. The Treasury viewpoint did not prevail over arguments of the Foreign Office (British treaty obligations) and those of the War Office (lack of barracks to accommodate a repatriated Rhine Army, particularly in view of the loss of the barracks in the Irish Free State). Demand-led and German-paid funding, which had allowed such extravagances as the daily publication of a free newspaper for the troops, gave way to more rigorous financial control.

Lieutenant General Sir John Du Cane had assumed command of the Rhine Army on 17 June 1924. Once the decision had been taken in principle to retain a British military presence, he became involved in negotiations to identify the location of that presence on the evacuation of Zone I. Although the Koblenz area appeared to be the most practical option, political considerations influenced the final decision to relocate the British Army of the Rhine to the Mainz bridgehead. The relocation started in December 1925 and was completed on 30 January 1926, on which day the Union Flag was lowered for the last time at the Excelsior Hotel in Cologne.

The Wiesbaden Bridgehead

General Headquarters of the British Army of the Rhine was now established at the Hohenzollern Hotel in Wiesbaden, which was the major town in the new British area of occupation. This area, generally referred to by the British as the Wiesbaden bridgehead, comprised about two-thirds of the Mainz bridgehead defined by the Armistice Convention and an enclave on the left bank around the confluence of the Rhine and Nahe rivers. [See Map 15.3] The relocation was accompanied by some reductions in the British force level. One infantry battalion moved back to the United Kingdom from Cologne without relief in January 1926 and the infantry strength was reduced by a further battalion in 1927. The Rhine Flotilla was disbanded on the evacuation of Cologne and the ancient tanks of the Rhine Army's tank company were replaced with a section of armoured cars. From 1927 the British Army of the Rhine comprised six infantry battalions (organized into two brigades), one cavalry regiment, one section of armoured cars, one brigade of field artillery (equivalent to a modern regiment) and field engineer and signal companies. The total strength was some 6,500 men; the French military presence in the Rhineland at this time stood at 55,000 men and the Belgians maintained 5,000 men in Aachen and the surrounding area. On 30 April 1927 Lieutenant General Sir William Thwaites became the sixth (and last) Commander-in-Chief of the first British Army of the Rhine.

The Wiesbaden bridgehead offered more attractive surroundings than the industrial conurbation of Cologne. The British garrison was dispersed over five major locations [See Map 15.3] and had few distractions from the normal routine of training, ceremonial and sport. The infantry battalions took it in turn to furnish a guard at the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission at Koblenz and, from July 1927, a company-sized contribution to an international force in the Saar Territory. [See Map 15.1] Relations with the German population were generally good; the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission was now pursuing a policy of 'invisible occupation' aimed at minimizing allied controls over the local authorities. Liaison with the local authorities was delegated to the commanders-in-chief; this responsibility resulted in the creation of a small civil affairs branch of the Rhine Army staff, manned by the Intelligence Corps. The British Summary Court remained in business but the volume of cases was much reduced.

Occupation Ends

International agreements in 1929 on the future payment of reparation resulted in a decision to terminate the allied occupation of the Rhineland. Zone II was to be evacuated by the end of 1929 and the evacuation of Zone III was to be completed by 30 June 1930. Although the Wiesbaden bridgehead lay within Zone III, the British government decided to withdraw the Rhine Army by the end of 1929. Contingency planning for a possible British withdrawal had been going on throughout the year but General Thwaites did not receive firm instructions to start the evacuation until 30 August 1929.

The two Union Flags at the Hohenzollern Hotel in Wiesbaden were lowered for the last time on 12 December 1929. The accompanying ceremonial was conducted by the 2nd Battalion The Royal Fusiliers in recognition of the fact that the battalion had been one of the first units to reach the Rhine with the 2nd Army in 1918. The two flags were carried folded at the head of a final procession through the streets of Wiesbaden to the railway station, where French military detachments paid honours to the departing rearguard of the British Army of the Rhine. General Thwaites and the remnants of his command then entrained for Ostend and arrived in the United Kingdom on 13 December 1929. One Union Flag remained flying in Wiesbaden, as the seat of the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission had been transferred there ahead of the deadline for the evacuation of Zone II. The final French evacuation of Zone III was completed on 30 June 1930, on which date the High Commission was dissolved.

Saar Plebiscite

British troops deployed for another plebiscite commitment in December 1934. The Treaty of Versailles had constituted the Saar Territory [See Map 15.1] as a League of Nations trusteeship but provided for a plebiscite to be held after 15 years to ascertain if the inhabitants wished the trusteeship arrangement to continue, or to be returned to German sovereignty or to be placed under French sovereignty.

The British contribution to the League of Nations plebiscite force comprised the commander, a squadron of armoured cars and two battalions. Italy provided a squadron of light tanks and

15.11 Education in the British Army. Soldiers learning chemistry at the Bonn University with their officers as instructors, © IWM

three battalions and there were smaller contributions from the Netherlands and Sweden.

The plebiscite was held on 13 January 1935 and resulted in a majority of over 90 per cent for restitution to Germany. No requirements arose for the force to intervene in support of the civil police; troops were used to guard and escort ballot boxes. The Saar became part of Germany again on 1 March 1935.

Comment on the Occupation

The Armistice occupation of the Rhineland had an obvious military purpose. Under the Treaty régime, the rationale for the allied military presence on the Rhine became political. The occupation was intended to provide Germany with a compelling incentive to discharge her Treaty obligations, thereby achieving eventual elimination of an unwelcome foreign military presence. When it became apparent that the reparation obligations placed on Germany were unrealistic, the occupation lost its purpose. Although it was claimed that the occupation guaranteed the disarmament obligations of the Treaty and the demilitarized status of the Rhineland, the intended termination of the occupation in 1935 offered no long-term guarantees in this regard. In the event, Germany remilitarized the Rhineland on 7 March 1936 and embarked on a massive rearmament programme in open defiance of the obligations imposed by the Treaty of Versailles.

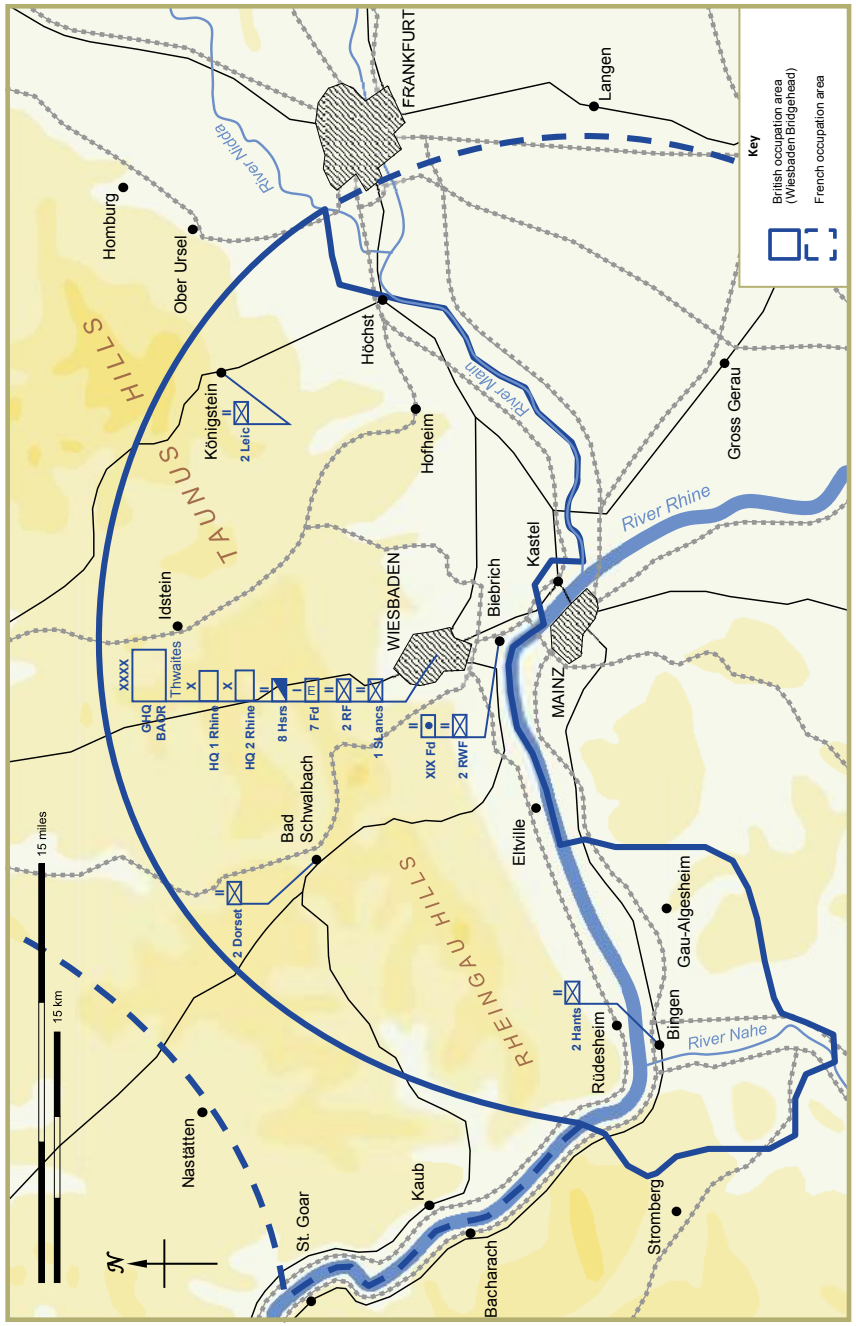
The political ambiguities of the British military presence in Germany were of little concern to the soldiers who served on the Rhine, in the plebiscite areas or in Danzig. Their discipline and good humour reduced the potential for serious friction with the local populations. Although no German wished to prolong the occupation of the Rhineland, accounts of both the Cologne and Wiesbaden evacuations record the expression of genuine good wishes to the departing troops by German officials and ordinary citizens.

It seems unlikely that many purely military lessons that are of relevance today will emerge from detailed study of events such as the Allenstein plebiscite, the two deployments to Upper Silesia, the occupation of Düsseldorf or the relocation of the Rhine Army from Cologne to Wiesbaden. It is certainly difficult to contemplate running relevant staff rides or battlefield tours in places such as northern Schleswig or the Saar.

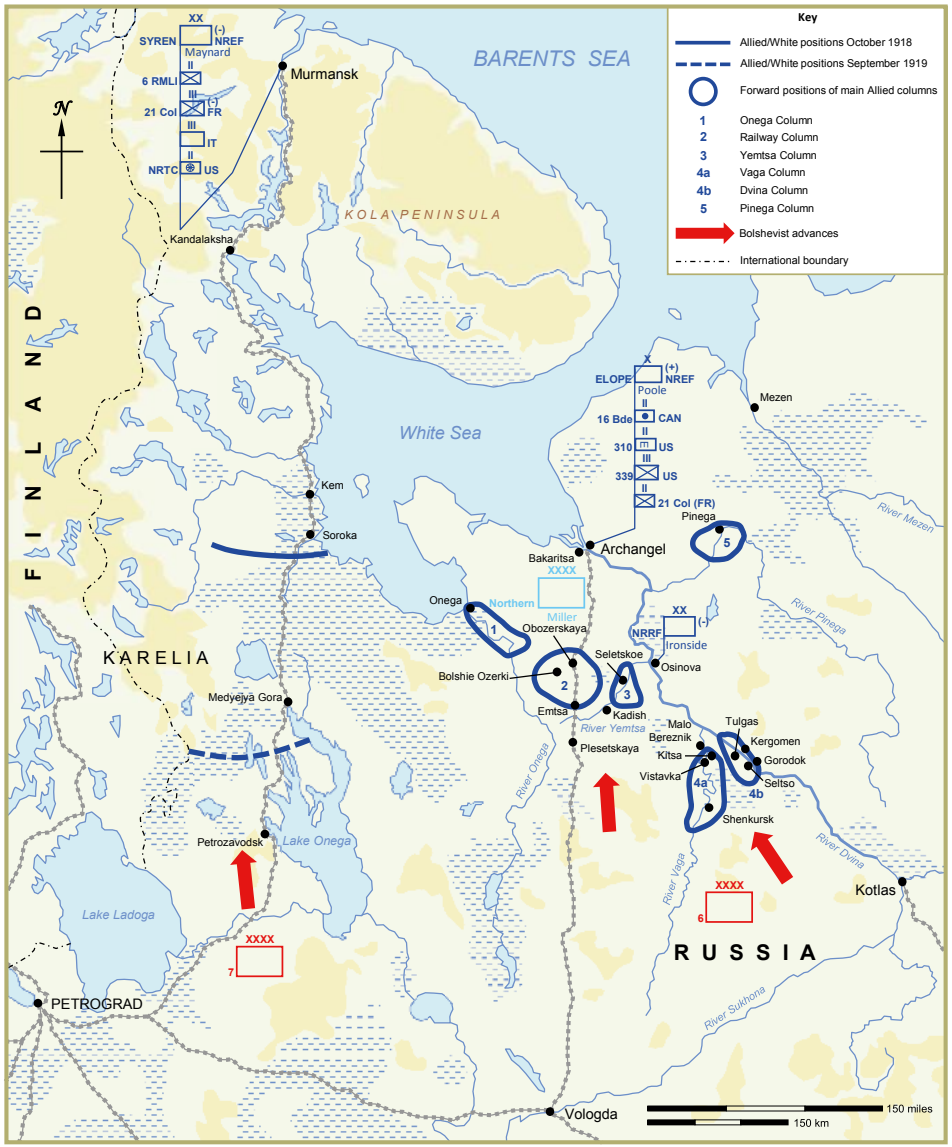
The important lessons that should emerge concern the enthusiasm of the British political leadership - notwithstanding reservations by the military leadership - to take on too many commitments with too few resources.

April 1921 saw attempts to juggle a perceived priority to continue the British military contribution in Upper Silesia with a priority to reinforce the United Kingdom in view of threatened industrial unrest and the continuing commitment of troops to Ireland. Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson - Chief of the Imperial General Staff at the time - was summoned to Chequers on 2 April 1921 to discuss these competing priorities with Lloyd George. Wilson confided to his diary that during these discussions he had asked Lloyd George if he wanted to be Prime Minister of England or of Silesia! The commitment in Upper Silesia was abandoned and four battalions were ordered back to the United Kingdom.

Upper Silesia became an absolute priority a few weeks later when the Polish insurgency presented a serious challenge to allied authority. This resulted in the deployment of all remaining Rhine Army battalions to Upper Silesia, effectively meaning that Britain had temporarily abdicated her responsibility to maintain an effective garrison in the Rhineland. This suited the French government at the time as the immediate crisis was in Upper Silesia and France had sufficient troops in the Rhineland to cover for the absent British battalions. In the final analysis, French - rather than British - interests were determining the priorities for the deployment of limited British military resources.



Map 15.3 Wiesbaden Bridgehead 1928



Map 16.1 North Russia 1918-19

16. North Russia, 1918 to 1919

Lieutenant General Jonathon Riley DSO CB PhD MA

	Allied	Bolshevist
Commanders	**British:** Major-General Edmund Ironside Major-General Frederick Poole Major-General Charles Clarkson Maynard Brigadier-General Lionel Sadlier-Jackson Brigadier-General George Grogan Brigadier-General R.L. Graham **U.S.** Brigadier-General George Evans Stewart Brigadier-General Wilds P. Richardson **White Russian** Lieutenant-General Yevgeni Miller	Leon Trotsky Aleksandr A. Samoilo Dmitri Parsky Dmitri Nikolaevi Nadjozny
Forces	**British and Canadian:** North Russia Naval Squadron (including 6th Battalion R.M.L.I.) 236 Infantry Brigade 237 Infantry Brigade 6 Brigade R.F.A. 16 Brigade C.F.A. and composite infantry battalion (-) (6,832 in Murmansk, 6,293 in Archangel) North Russia Relief Force (Grogan's (238), Sadlier-Jackson's and Graham's Brigades) **US:** 339 Infantry Regiment 1/310 Engineer Battalion (5,302 in Archangel) **French:** 21st Colonial Infantry Regiment (1,686 in Archangel, 731 in Murmansk) **Italians** (1,251 in Murmansk) White Russian, Serb, Polish, Finnish, Estonian, and Australian volunteers.	Seventh and Eighth Red Armies
Context	North Russian intervention, Russian Civil War	
Casualties	Allied - 526 British and Dominion killed, 167 U.S. killed, 29 missing, 12 captured.	Russian - 2,150 killed (Allied estimate).
Consequences	Allied withdrawal from Russia; Red victory in the Russian Civil War and the establishment of Communist rule.	

Introduction

On 15 March 1917, Czar Nicholas II of Russia abdicated in the face of the growing dissent at home, made all too obvious by the February Revolution, and failure at the front. In place of Imperial rule, for Nicholas's chosen successor, the Grand Duke Mikhail declined the throne, Alexander Kerensky established the Russian Provisional Government and a fledgling parliamentary democracy. Kerensky pledged, moreover, to continue the war in the East against the Central Powers. On 22 March 1917, the U.S.A. became the first world power to recognise Kerensky's government, followed two days later by Britain, France and Italy.

A little over a week later, on 2 April 1917, President Woodrow Wilson went before a joint session of the U.S. Congress to request a declaration of war against Germany. On 4 April 1917, the U.S. Senate voted in support of the measure to declare war on Germany. The House concurred two days later. The United States later declared war on German ally Austria-Hungary on 7 December 1917. In return for Kerensky's promise to keep fighting, the U.S. began providing economic and technical support to the Russian provisional government. Kerensky's great offensive of 18 June 1917 was, however, stopped and then defeated by a German counter-attack. The Russian Army began to fall apart, plagued by mutinies and desertions which the Bolshevists encouraged, and beset by shortages of weapons, ammunition, transport, fuel, food, clothing and medical supplies. To try to ameliorate these, shipments of war materiel were sent by the allies to the North Russian ports of Archangel on the White Sea and ice-free Mumansk, 370 miles north-west on the Kola Peninsula, which lay beyond the reach of German interdiction. However the difficulties of onward transportation quickly led to a pile-up of stocks in the warehouses at Archangel and Murmansk.

In October, following the second revolution, the Bolshevists under Vladimir Ilić Lenin came to power, setting up the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, and with a firm commitment to ending the war with Germany and Austria-Hungary. Five months later, they signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, ceding a great swathe of territory in what is now the Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic States, to Germany. Faced with the imminent arrival of large numbers of American troops on the Western Front, but no longer needing to keep a huge army in the East, the German high command began to redeploy infantry divisions to the Western Front in preparation for a final offensive in the early spring of 1918.

The British government formulated its policy towards the new Russia in December 1917, deciding to support 'any responsible body in Russia willing to oppose [the Bolshevists]'[1] and to provide funds where necessary. After the signing of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Allied operations began to focus as much on the Bolshevists as on the Central Powers, however in April 1918, a German Army of 55,000 men under General Freiherr Colmar von der Goltz was sent to Finland to support the Finns in their struggle for independence from Bolshevist rule. The Finns' bid for freedom was not supported by the Western Allies, thus throwing them into the arms of the Germans. The arrival of the Germans provided an additional complicating factor in North Russia, since it was possible that this force might try to capture the Murmansk-Petrograd railway, the port of Murmansk and even the city of Archangel. German possession of Murmansk, and its use by U-boats, would have serious consequences.

There was also a need for the Western allies to rescue the Czech Legion, a volunteer armed force of almost 60,000 men composed predominantly of former Czech and Slovak prisoners of war, who had abandoned their allegiance to Austria-Hungary and fought for the Entente in Russia. In doing so, they aimed to win the allies' support for the independence of Bohemia, Moravia and the Slovak territories from Austria-Hungary. In February 1918, Lenin had promised the Legion free passage across Siberia to Vladivostok, however much of the force had been stranded on the Trans-Siberian railway, blocked in by local disputes and shortages of locomotives. By May, the Legion was fighting the Bolshevists and had seized control of long stretches of the railway.[2] By mid-July, the legionaries had taken over the railway from Samara to Irkutsk, and by the beginning of September they had cleared Bolshevist forces from the entire length of the Railway and these cities, seizing also Yekaterinburg, where the Czar and his family were executed less than a week before the arrival of the Legion. Not unnaturally, the news of the Legion's victories in Siberia was welcomed in Britain and France, where the governments saw a possible opportunity to re-open an eastern front against Germany.[3] President Wilson at first resisted these demands but was eventually obliged by both domestic and foreign pressure to support the Legion's evacuation from Siberia by U.S. and Japanese troops.

The sudden collapse of Turkey, Germany and Austria, and the Armistice in November 1918, fundamentally changed British policy towards Russia, since the presence of Allied troops could no longer be explained as part of the war against the Central Powers. The British were, de facto if not de jure, at war with Bolshevism. It was against this background that Winston Churchill became Secretary of State for War. Churchill demanded a clear Russia policy [see text box *A Note by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff on the Present Military Situation in Russia*] but in the end a compromise was reached in which Britain would support the Whites with military supplies but withdraw its troops as soon as anti-Bolshevist forces were capable of holding their own.[4] In North Russia, the Entente governments decided on a military intervention with three principal objectives: first, to prevent Allied war materiel in Archangel from falling into German or Bolshevist hands; secondly, to mount an offensive to rescue the Czech Legion and resurrect the Eastern Front; and last by defeating the Bolshevist army in co-operation with the Czech Legion, to encourage and support White Russian offensives under Admiral Alexander Kolchak from his headquarters in Omsk,[5] General Anton Denikin in the Ukraine, and the local White forces under the Governor of Archangel, General Yevgeni Miller.

Ground

The region was mainly sub-arctic tundra, heavily wooded and swampy, with little infrastructure. Military movement therefore depended on the lines of communications south from Archangel, which were the northern branch of the Dvina River in the east; the Vaga River, Archangel Railway and the Onega River in the west; and the Yemtsa River - which provided a lateral line of communication between the Vaga and the railway - in the centre.

16.3 An armoured train leaving Medvedje-Gora for the front, 9 September 1919 © IWM

16.1 HMS *Glory* near the Murmansk quay, 1919 © IWM

16.2 Sorting mail at the army post office, Murmansk, May 1919 © IWM

16.4 Horse-drawn passenger sleigh, Murmansk, 1919 © IWM

16.5 Horse-drawn sleigh supply convoy, Murmansk, 1919 © IWM

16.6 Vickers machine guns aboard *Jolly Roger*, a 70ft armed motor boat, on Lake Onega, Medvedje-Gora, 1919 © IWM

16.7 Men of the East Surrey Regiment preparing a meal at a machine gun post at Lumbuski Bridge, 1919 © IWM

16.8 The officers' mess of the Royal Marine Artillery outpost at Zavod, 1919 © IWM

16.9 Troops of the 1/ 9th Battalion, Hampshire Regiment marching through streets of Vladivostok on the way to the station prior to leaving for Omsk, December 1918 © IWM

Deployment

A British Naval task force, the North Russia Squadron, had been formed to protect the materiel shipments in the North Russian Ports. The squadron, under Rear-Admiral Thomas Kemp, consisted of the battleship H.M.S. *Glory*, a storeship, an armed boarding vessel and several smaller craft converted for service as minesweepers. The force was expanded to more than twenty ships, including several monitors - armoured gunboats - and two Seaplane Carriers, H.M.S. *Pegasus* and H.M.S. *Nairana* operating Fairey Campania and Sopwith Baby seaplanes. In addition, the Royal Air Force provided a few Airco DH-4 bombers and a single Sopwith Camel fighter. They were bolstered by a provisional battalion of the Royal Marine Light Infantry, the 6th, which was formed from a company of 150 Royal Marine Artillerymen in the infantry role, who arrived at Murmansk in April 1918, followed by 370 more in three companies drawn from each of the Royal Marine divisions at Portsmouth, Plymouth and Deal, in May.

On 3 June 1918 the Allied Supreme War Council at Versailles sanctioned the dispatch, under British command, of ground force expeditions to Murmansk and Archangel. The Murmansk force, under the code-name 'Syren',[6] was commanded by Major-General Charles Clarkson Maynard, and consisted of 600 from 2/7th D.L.I., 280 Machine-Gun (MG) Company, and a half company of Royal Engineers from 237 Infantry Brigade, later reinforced by Royal Artillery batteries. The intended role at Archangel was to muster anti-Bolshevik forces into trained formations, and to this task was assigned a British Mission codenamed 'Elope',[7] under Major-General Frederick Poole. The force at Archangel consisted of 236 and 237 Brigades under a Force HQ and force troops which included 6 Brigade R.F.A. (formed of 420th and 434th Batteries, and 421st Howitzer Battery); 435th (Howitzer) Battery, 252 M.G. Company and two Engineer field companies.[8] Both forces reached Murmansk on 23 June 1918, escorted by the Allied naval squadron; and finding Archangel in Bolshevist hands, the 'Elope' Mission landed with 'Syren'. On 31 July a naval force carrying British and French troops attacked Archangel, and with the aid of an anti Bolshevist uprising, captured the town. This made it possible to transfer the 'Elope' party to Archangel during August.

Britain also supplied six tanks together with their volunteer crews - forty-nine officers and men of the Tank Corps - to fight alongside the White Russian North-Western Army, the only British troops to do so. In the autumn of 1919, British tank crews pushed to within twelve miles (nineteen kilometres) of the centre of Petrograd. All six tanks survived the battle, in spite of mechanical problems. There were also British deployments to Vladivostok between August 1918 and late 1919, principally the 25th (Garrison) Battalion of the Middlesex, 1/9th (Cyclist) Battalion, Hampshire Regiment, and some companies of the H.L.I. transferred from Archangel.

The British force was bolstered by allied contingents. The French sent a force formed from the 21st Colonial Infantry Regiment, and engineers, followed by 1,400 Serb and Polish volunteers who had fought their way up from Odessa on the Black Sea; and 1,500 Estonians. 500 men of the Finnish Legion also held the Kola Peninsula, for in December, the Germans withdrew from Finland and a government friendly to the Entente was established. The

16.10 Constructing a railway bridge in Shuyenetskaya © IWM

British and French still felt, however, that they could not muster sufficient troops for the task in hand, given that the war on the Western Front was approaching its climax. President Woodrow Wilson was therefore asked to provide U.S. troops. In July 1918, against the advice of the U.S. War Department, Wilson agreed to the deployment of a contingent of around 8,000 U.S. troops, hastily organised into the American North Russia Expeditionary Force, otherwise known as the 'Polar Bear Expedition'. When General John J. Pershing received the President's directive, he directed that the 339th Infantry Regiment, along with the 1st Battalion of the 310th Engineers and other combat support units from the 85th Infantry Division would be sent to Russia instead of being committed to operations in France. These units were trained and re-equipped in England with Russian guns and then sent to North Russia, where they arrived in Archangel on 4 September 1918, coming under British command. Concurrently, an American Expeditionary Force for Siberia was put together under the command of Major-General William S. Graves, which totalled 7,950 officers and men. The A.E.F. Siberia included the 27th and 31st Infantry Regiments, reinforced by volunteers from the 12th, 13th and 62nd Infantry Regiments of the 8th Infantry Division, Graves' former command.[9]

The final element of the Allied force came from the Dominions. Australia sent 150 volunteers as trainers and mentors for the White forces. More came from Canada: in mid-May, the War Office had suggested a Canadian contribution of five officers and eleven NCOs, which was agreed. When in July 1918 the question of reinforcing the 'Syren' force arose, Canada was asked if she could provide an infantry battalion, but this was declined. On 30 July the War Office made a further request for eighteen Canadian officers and seventy NCOs, to be included in a special mobile force which was being formed in the Murmansk area from Allied contingents and local levies. This time the Canadian Government agreed. On 17 September ninety two officers and NCOs, all volunteers, commanded by Lt Col J. E. Leckie, sailed from Leith, Scotland, for Murmansk. Last, on 3 August, Canada was asked to provide two field artillery batteries for the contingent in Archangel. Again the Canadian Government agreed and 16 Brigade, C.F.A., consisting of the 67th and 68th Batteries under the command of Lt Col. C. H. L. Shaman, left for Archangel on 20 September. The strength of the Canadian Brigade was eighteen officers and 469 men. Both at Murmansk and Archangel the Allied forces were by now of very mixed composition, with contingents from Britain, the United States, France and Canada. Some Italian troops also joined the force, and in both areas these troops were joined by anti-Bolshevik Russians and Karelians. The total Allied strength at Murmansk never exceeded 15,000 men and that at Archangel 20,000. Opposing this international force were the Seventh and Eighth Red Armies, forming the Army of the North West, which although numerous, was poorly trained, equipped and ill-prepared for battle.

16.11 General Ironside watching a boxing bout between youngsters of the Slavo-British Legion, Archangel © IWM

16.12 The 86th General Hospital's operating theatre, Murmansk, 1919 © IWM

Operations

The harsh terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had at first shocked the Bolshevists into seeking Allied aid and the initial landings in Archangel and Murmansk were made with Bolshevist compliance. But when no support was forthcoming, and it became apparent that the Allies favoured the Whites, the Reds believed that any further intervention might not only be dangerous in itself, but also precipitate further German incursions. In May 1918 the inauguration of formal German-Soviet relations removed the German threat to the new regime in Russia and the Bolshevists decided to resist further Allied landings: after the capture of Archangel any semi-official relations that had existed between the Allies and the Soviet Government came to an abrupt end.

When the British arrived in Archangel, they found that the Allied war materiel had already been moved up the Dvina River by retreating Bolshevist forces. Therefore, when the American troops arrived one month later, they were immediately used in offensive operations designed to aid in the rescue of the Czech Legion. The 1st Battalion, 339th Infantry was sent up the Dvina River and the 3rd Battalion, 339th up the Vologda Railway where they engaged and pushed back the Bolshevist forces for the next six weeks.

16.13 Wounded British troops, 17 September 1919 © IWM

The Canadian field brigade reached Archangel on 1 October 1918 and disembarked two days later. Major-General Edmund Ironside, who was to succeed Poole, arrived in the same convoy. Although the local population was apathetic and showed no desire to fight, Ironside found that Allied troops had pushed the Bolshevists far enough 'to make elbow-room for the enlistment of as many Russians as possible during the winter'. In the face of stiffening Bolshevist resistance, Poole's force was consolidating for defence. Five Allied columns had been pushed into the interior of the country; one had reached a point a hundred miles along the Vologda Railway, which ran due south from Archangel. One was upstream of the confluence of the Dvina and Vaga Rivers, with forces on both these waterways. The progress of this column, which had advanced about 260 miles from Archangel, had been aided by a naval force of eleven monitors, minesweepers and Russian gunboats.

In spite of the growing distance between these two main columns, which consisted of British, French, American and Russian troops, both were under the command of one British officer, Brigadier-General R. G. Finlayson. Two smaller columns protected the flanks of the column on the railway, one on the Yemtsa River to the east and the other at Onega on the White Sea to the west. A fifth small column was at Pinega, sixty miles east of Archangel. There was no continuous front; in fact the Vologda railway column was operating on a front of little more than 1,000 yards. Communications between the isolated columns were extremely difficult, for the forest-covered ground was swampy in summer and under deep snow in the winter. Except for the column on the railway, all supplies had to be brought forward by water and cart. The troops lived in blockhouses protected by barbed wire, and the effect which the approaching Arctic winter would have on men and weapons was unpredictable. One thing was certain: with ice shutting off Archangel from the rest of Europe all winter, for several months the force would have to subsist on what it had been able to accumulate while the rivers were still open. On assuming command on 14 October, Ironside placed the two

16.14 A 4.5" Howitzer on an armoured train © IWM

main columns under separate commanders and in an effort to recruit more Russians he visited the jails of Archangel to form a battalion of the Slavo-British Allied Legion under Canadian Captain R. C. Dyer. This unit was known as the 'Dyer Battalion' in honour of its commander, who died later of exposure.

Although 11 November 1918 brought a cessation of hostilities on the Western Front, on the Dvina River the date marked the beginning of a period of bitter fighting against an attack by 3,500 Bolshevist troops and a score of armed river craft, directed personally by Leon Trotsky. By the end of the day, the enemy withdrew into the woods, leaving behind sixty dead and wounded. Two Canadians and ten British soldiers were killed. Bolshevist attempts to capture Tulgas continued until 15 November, when the enemy retired and the Allied troops settled in for the winter. The arrival in January of a section of 4.5" howitzers, and of two 60-pounders on 3 April provided some much-needed parity in range and weight of fire. Meanwhile, the Yemtsa column saw no major operations until 30 December. On that date two companies of the 339th U.S. Infantry Regiment, supported by a company of French troops, drove the Bolshevists out of Kadish, about twenty miles above Seletskoe. The Bolshevists counter-attacked in force next day, but were thrown back.

The Bolshevists now decided to launch a general offensive to drive the Allies out of Archangel, and on 19 January a strong force, bolstered by German trainers and advisers, attacked American and Russian troops at Shenkursk. The enemy was in greatly superior strength, and on the 25 January, when the town was practically surrounded, the garrison withdrew to a new defensive position at Kitsa, thirty miles to the north. By now, the cold was intense, the Arctic nights depressingly long and the troops more than a little dispirited. With the signing of the Armistice in November the original aims of the expedition had disappeared and Allied operations had become a small part of the Russian Civil War. Unsurprisingly there were calls in the British press for the troops' return. However, by the middle of January, Ironside had received no clear orders, for the Allies had no agreed policy on the Russian Civil War. On 4 March, the British War Cabinet decided to press the Allied Representatives at Versailles to agree to the early evacuation of Northern Russia. A general review of the situation was sent to Ironside at the end of April 1919 which still left him without definite instructions, but made it clear at least that his objective would be 'a peaceful evacuation of all Allied forces before the coming winter'. This also meant that the goal of linking up with the Czech Legion was abandoned.

Meanwhile, the uncertainty of their situation led to disaffection among the Allied troops. On 26 February, the Marine battalion was sent from Murmansk to reinforce Ironside's force but refused to proceed to the front. The trouble was quickly suppressed, and the battalion marched the same day, but at the beginning of March a company of French Colonials made a similar refusal. At the end of the month an American company disobeyed orders to return to its forward position. In March, Bolshevist attacks resumed against Vistavka, and on 25 April, White Russian infantry defending Tulgas mutinied, killing seven of their officers, and surrendering their positions to the Bolshevists. Kergomen was then assaulted, but the melting of the river ice enabled two British gunboats mounting 6-inch guns to arrive from Archangel, and Tulgas was recaptured on 18 May.

By now, the Canadian government had had enough and announced the withdrawal of its force. By September 1919 all Canadians at Murmansk and Archangel had been evacuated. In the meantime, minor operations to keep open a line of withdrawal against the Seventh Red Army as far south as Lake Onega took place along the Archangel Railway with an Armoured Train manned by the Americans. The last major battle fought by the Americans before their departure took place at Bolshie Ozerki between 31 March and 4 April 1919, for they too were leaving. President Wilson had directed his War Department on 16 February 1919 to begin planning the American withdrawal.

16.15 Bolshevik soldiers or prisoners in their camp at Medvedya Gora, 1919 © IWM

Brigadier-General Wilds P. Richardson arrived in Archangel aboard the icebreaker Canada on 17 April 1919 with orders from General Pershing to organise a coordinated withdrawal of the American troops 'at the earliest possible moment'. The Australian government took the decision to withdraw its small contingent in March 1919; however in July, Captain Alan Brown, who was serving with the White forces, was murdered when his men defected to the Bolshevists.

The North Russia Relief Force

Faced with the departure of their allies and mounting criticism at home, the British government had decided to abandon the effort in North Russia. It was hoped that a pro-Entente government could be established in Archangel and a link-up with Denikin and/or Kolchak achieved. General Lord Rawlinson was despatched to oversee co-ordination. In order to take the place of the departing American and Canadian troops and enable the withdrawal, recruiting for a relief force began in Britain on a voluntary basis. This force ultimately included men from many regiments of the British Army and all the Dominions. The North Russian Relief Force (N.R.R.F.) was formed into two brigades: one under the command of Brigadier-General Lionel Sadlier-Jackson;[10] and the other under Brigadier-General George Grogan. Both came under Ironside's tactical command. Sadlier-Jackson's brigade mustered 4,000 men, including 150 Australians who had enlisted in the N.R.R.F. under Major Harry Harcourt, forming two companies in 45 R.F.;[11] Grogan's 238 Infantry Brigade was larger.[12] Ironside also retained direct command of 16 Canadian Artillery Brigade until its withdrawal, and the 2/10th Royal Scots. An additional brigade headquarters was also formed under Brigadier-General R.L. Graham and task organised for specific operations. The R.A.F. also established a makeshift airfield at Bakaritsa, near Archangel and later, another at Obozerskaya.

The N.R.R.F. arrived in Archangel on 5 June 1919 aboard the SS Porto and SS Stephen and moved up the Dvina River to Osinova.[13] There they began training for an offensive which was designed to push the Red Army back, preventing interference with the Allied withdrawal. A secondary aim was to leave the White Russian forces in a better military position. With the arrival of the N.R.R.F., the survivors of the earlier expeditionary force were evacuated.

Early raids on the Bolshevist positions, like that in late January south of Malo Bersnik, were costly failures. However in early August 1919, Ironside launched an offensive against the Red Army around Gorodok-Seltsoe,[14] inflicting heavy casualties and taking many prisoners for relatively little loss. The offensive was mainly fought through thick pine forest and swamp which provided little terrain for manoeuvre and although hugely successful, may have been unnecessary. A further major action was fought at Emtsa on 29 August. At Seltsoe, 1,000 prisoners were taken and nineteen field guns captured. During this action an Australian, Corporal Arthur Sullivan, won the Victoria Cross for saving a group of drowning men while under fire. Sergeant Samuel Pearse, also an Australian, won a posthumous V.C. at Emtsa, attacking Russian blockhouses under fire.

Withdrawal, September - October 1919

The victories of 10 and 29 August gave Ironside the space needed to withdraw. Only minor patrol activity continued throughout September to provide a screen, while forward positions were evacuated and stores either removed or destroyed. By the night of 26/27 September the Allies had withdrawn from Archangel; Murmansk was evacuated between 2 and 12 October aboard a flotilla of troopships and escorts which sailed for Britain.[15]

Commentary

In spite of the Allied intervention, most of the actual fighting in Russia was left to the Russians. During the spring of 1919 White Russian armies under Admiral Kolchak and General Denikin achieved a series of successes; in May Lenin was forced to tell his Revolutionary Military Council that 'if we do not conquer the Urals before winter I think the destruction of the Revolution is inevitable.' By the end of June, less than one-sixth of Russia remained in Bolshevik hands. But that was the zenith of White Russian achievements. In July they lost the Urals to the Bolsheviks and in October an advance on Moscow was halted 250 miles from the capital. During the following winter the Bolshevists drove White forces from one stronghold after another. In March 1920 British warships and marines covered the evacuation of White troops to the Crimea, the only territory still in White hands (see the chapter on the Transcaucasus). As it became clear that the anti-Bolshevik cause was doomed, all Allied contingents withdrew from Russia except the Japanese, who remained in Vladivostok for two more years. The Czechs were safely evacuated and crossed Canada en route to Europe in June 1920.

The Battlefield Today

The area is accessible by road, sea, air or railway in summer; in winter, the near-arctic conditions make access too difficult. However the political climate remains as chilly as the weather and clearance to visit the battlefields is difficult to obtain. The infrastructure remains primitive with few hotels. Assuming the visitor can get to Archangel or Murmansk, there is little to see even though the terrain remains much as it was. There are two allied war cemeteries administered by the C.W.G.C: that in Archangel contains two graves and a memorial to the 219 British officers and men killed in the area and whose graves are unknown. It can be reached from the main railway station by travelling along the main road towards the Dvina River and turning right onto Obvodnyi Kanal Avenue. The cemetery will be found on the right of the road. The cemetery in Murmansk contains forty graves and a memorial listing forty-three officers and men whose graves are unknown. This can be found by travelling south from the main Lenin Prospekt to the principal cross-roads, turning left and continuing to the second junction which leads into a former state farm. The cemetery is 100 metres further on.

Further Reading

The various expeditions to Russia have received limited notice until quite recently and the literature is therefore small. The Official Histories, for example, take little or no account of operations after the Armistice on the Western Front in November 1918. Edmund Ironside wrote his own account of the expedition, *Archangel 1918-1919* (London, 1953). John Swettenham's book *The Allied Invasion of Russia, 1918 - 1919* (London: 1967) has also stood the test of time. The best recent publications are as follows:

R.M. Connaughton, *The Republic of the Ushakovka: Admiral Kolchak and the Allied Intervention in Siberia, 1918-1920*, (London: 1990).

Clifford Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade: the British Invasion of Russia, 1918-1920* (London: 2007).

Jon Smele, *Civil War in Siberia: The Anti-Bolshevik Government of Admiral Kolchak, 1918-1920*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Robert L. Willett, *Russian Sideshow* (Washington D.C.: 2003).

16.16 General Lord Rawlinson, GOC the North Russia Relief Force Expedition, climbing into the observer's seat of a Fairey IIIC seaplane. Lake Onega, Medvedya Gora, October 1919 © IWM

Endnotes

1. References - Notes are shown in the electronic version (enclosed DVD) only. T.N.A. CAB 23/9, Minutes of the War Cabinet, 3 and 14 December 1917.
2. Brent Mueggenberg, *The Czecho-Slovak Struggle for Independence 1914-1920* (Jefferson, U.S.A., 2014), p. 188 - 191.
3. George Kennan, *Soviet-American Relations: The Decision to Intervene* (Princeton University Press, U.S.A., 1958), pp. 357 - 358, 382 - 384.
4. See the Chapter on the Trans-Caucasus and South Russia for more details.
5. For more details on Kolchak's forces see R.M. Connaughton, *The Republic of the Ushakovka: Admiral Kolchak and the Allied Intervention in Siberia, 1918-1920*, (London, 1990); and Jon Smele, Civil War in *Siberia: The Anti-Bolshevik Government of Admiral Kolchak, 1918 - 1920*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006).
6. The War Diaries of 'Syren' Force are in T.N.A. WO 95/5425, 5426 and 5427.
7. The War Diaries of 'Elope' Force are in T.N.A. WO 95/5423.
8. 236 Brigade consisted of 6th and 13th Green Howards, 11th Royal Sussex, 17th King's, a trench mortar battery and troops from the Finnish Legion. 237 Brigade consisted of1st East Surreys, 2/7th DLI, and a machine gun company.
9. Robert L. Willett, *Russian Sideshow* (Washington D.C., 2003), p. 166.
10. Sadlier-Jackson's brigade war diary is in T.N.A. WO 95/5430.
11. Bruce Muirden, *The Diggers Who Signed On For More: Australia's Part in the Russian Wars of Intervention, 1918-1919* (Kent Town, Australia, 1990), p 70 - 72.
12. 238 Brigade included 1st Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, 2nd Hampshires, 2nd H.L.I., a trench mortar battery, 8th Battalion M.G.C., 55 Battery R.F.A., 384 Field Company R.E., and supporting medical, signals and supply companies. Sadlier-Jackson's Brigade included the 45th and 46th Royal Fusiliers, 201st Battalion M.G.C., Campion's Battery R.A., 385 Field Company R.E. and supporting medical and supply companies. The Deyer battalion was assigned to the brigade from June 1919.
13. The War Diaries of the Dvina Force are in T.N.A. WO 95/5429 and 5430, and WO 154/337.
14. The orders for the attack are BM/509/2 dated 2 August 1919 in T.N.A. WO 95/5430.
15. Parliament Command Paper, Cmd 818, 1920, the Evacuation of North Russia. The evacuation instructions are dated 14 September 1919 in T.N.A. WO 95/5429.

Note by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff on the present military situation in Russia with a proposal as to the best military action possible under the circumstances

An Extract from The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson 1918-1922, edited by Keith Jeffery (Army Records Society, 1985), and included here with his kind permission.

1. There appear to be two military solutions to the present chaotic situation in Russia:

   a. To declare war formally on the Bolsheviks and to move into Russia in sufficient force to overthrow the Bolshevik Armies and then allow Russia to determine her own form of Government.

   b. To define the new Russia by delimitating the eastern and northern frontiers of all the new States; to order all Russian forces outside her new boundaries to retire within them and then to treat the Russia so described as a Neutral State until she herself goes to war with the Allies or joins the League of Nations.

2. After a careful and detailed examination of proposal (a) I have come to the distinct conclusion that the Allies do not dispose of sufficient forces to warrant the attempt being made. I therefore rule it out.

3. As regards proposal (b) I am of opinion that apart from the fact that both our interest and our honour insist on its adoption the allies possess sufficient force and power both moral and physical to adopt it as their course of action and with good hope of successful issue.

4. From the military point of view the following Allied action is necessary:

   a. The frontiers of the states which have seceded from Russia must be clearly defined. I understand these States to be: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Ruthenia, Bessarabia (to include the Bukovina),Caucasus.

   b. The sovereign rights of the Russian Government shall cease in these new States and all Russian troops etc. shall be at once drawn back behind the new frontier thus defined.

   c. By this means one continuous land frontier will be established from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea to the east of which Russia will lie and to the west these young States, and a clearly defined line from the Black Sea to the Caspian to the north of which Russia will lie and to the south the young States. It will be for the Allies to determine their respective responsibilities as regards economic, financial and, if necessary, military assistance to these new States; thus Great Britain might be responsible for Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania; France might be similarly responsible for Poland-and so forth.

   d. Pending the acceptance by the Bolsheviks of the arrangements previously suggested and the execution of the terms laid down the Allies should continue their present policy of giving every assistance to those Russian elements (such as Denikin) which have been called into being by recent events.

5. It is probable that the Bolsheviks will agree to a decision presented to them by the United Allies and will withdraw behind their new frontiers leaving all these young States in peace and quiet and if they do it seems to me that we may have to withdraw our troops from Archangel, Ukraine, and Siberia and our further assistance from Denikin etc., but this would be a gradual withdrawal and we would have time to make the best arrangements we could for our Russian friends.

6. It is possible on the other hand that the Bolsheviks may refuse to retire behind their new frontier. In this case the Allies will have no option but to force them to carry out their orders. They will have to declare war on Bolshevik Russia for being in occupation of territories of some of the Allies or Protected States.

7. **What would be the issue of such a war?**
   The populations of the States mentioned in para. 4(a) amount to 46,180,000 whereas the population of European Russia (less the new States) amounts to 24,000,000. It would seem therefore at the first blush that a contest between these young States and European Russia would be a hopeless undertaking but this is far from being the case. The Bolsheviks have only got some 270,000 troops in European Russia; the railways in this theatre are in a state of great disorganisation and in a hopeless state of repair with no power of amelioration; the power of making munitions etc. is very limited; the output of aeroplanes and tanks is negligible. The Bolsheviks possess few big guns, a limited amount of ammunition, poor gas appliances or protection etc. and no means of increasing production; added to the above will be complete isolation from the outside world while poor power of production, poor power of manufacture and still poorer power of transportation will make the conduct of war on even a moderate scale impossible. On the other hand the Border States will have behind them the whole support, moral and material, of the Allies - and in Allies I of course include America since America is at least as responsible as anyone else for calling these States into being. The Border States would also have the assistance of such Allied voluntary effort as it may be thought possible and advisable to give. There can be no doubt as to the final issue of such a war.

8. What would be the cost of such a war?
   It is not possible to form an estimate of the cost until the frontiers have been delimitated and until the total front of operations has been divided up and allotted to each of the Great Powers, but so far as Great Britain is concerned we are still possessed of vast stores of munitions of all sorts, of clothing, boots etc. the grant of which would not form a fresh charge on the Exchequer. It is true that we should have to nurse those Border States which fell to our care with food, agricultural implements, and other necessities of peace life which tend to make a people busy, thriving, and contented and which are therefore some of the surest means of preventing the spread of Bolshevism, but it does not appear to me that all this put together would mean anything very formidable nor indeed, since the war material and clothing is already available, does it appear that the charges will be much greater than the responsibilities we have already undertaken - vis a vis - these young States - would necessarily entail.

9. I have not touched on the question of unity of Command in the Border States, this is a matter which can be dealt with later, nor have I referred to Bolshevist Propaganda - a most important matter - because I deem it a little bit outside the scope of a military paper.

10. In conclusion I submit the following clean cut proposals:

    a. An advance into Russia with a view to the defeat of the Bolshevik Armies and the occupation of the country followed by a new Government to be set up by Russians is not, under present conditions, a possible operation of war.

    b. If the frontiers of the Border States are delimitated, if the frontiers and states thus defined are divided up amongst the Great Powers for the purposes shewn in para 4(c) it is in my opinion an operation of war to force the Bolshevik troops back over the newly defined frontiers should they not agree to go peaceably, and then to maintain those frontiers against any attacks which Russian forces can bring to bear against them.

Paris

19th February 1919

Henry Wilson

C.I.G.S.

Map 17.1 Turkey 1918-23

17. Turkey, Trans-Caucasia and South Russia

Lieutenant General Jonathon Riley DSO CB PhD MA

(Campaign Summary - see page 253)

Introduction - Turkey, 1918 - 1923

Following the Armistice of Mudros which ended the war between Turkey and the Allies, British, French and Italian troops moved into the Turkish capital, Constantinople (now Istanbul),[1] and the forts on the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. It was the first time that the city had changed hands since its conquest in 1453. The first French brigade entered the city on 12 November 1918. An Italian battalion of 760 men landed in Galata, just south of the city, on 7 February 1919 and was later joined by a contingent of paramilitary Carabinieri. The terms of the Armistice of Mudros were severe and consisted of twenty-five points, which included the opening of access to the Black Sea, the notification of all minefields, the handover of prisoners of war and internees, the demobilisation of the Turkish army, except for troops needed to secure the frontiers, and the withdrawal of Turkish troops in Persia, the surrender of all warships, the occupation of strategic points by the Allies and their use of harbours, shipyards and docks, the occupation of the Taurus tunnels, and more.[2] The area around the Straits was declared a neutral zone which would be occupied by Allied troops; Turkish troops were forbidden from entering these areas.

Allied troops occupied zones just as in the Rhineland, under a joint military administration which was established early in December 1918. The French took the old city centre, or Stamboul; the British took the district of Pera-Galata; and the Italians occupied Kadikov and Scutari.[3] The ancient city of Smyrna, or Izmir, in Asia Minor was also occupied by Greek troops from May 1919 and their advance inland triggered the Greco-Turkish War which continued until the Greeks were forced out of Asia Minor in September 1922. Admiral Somerset Gough-Calthorpe, Commander in Chief (C-in-C) Mediterranean Fleet, was appointed as the British High Commissioner in Constantinople with Lieutenant General Sir George Milne as C-in-C British Black Sea Army. Milne was ultimately responsible for all British forces in Turkey, South Russia and Trans-Caucasia. The French sent General Franchet d'Espèrey as their High Commissioner, who on 8 February 1919 entered the city on a white horse, deliberately recalling the entry of Mehmed the Conqueror in 1453. Five days later, the Allied fleet sailed into the Bosphorus.

Deployment

The British occupation force was based on the 28th Infantry Division under the command of Major-General H. Croker. When hostilities with Bulgaria ceased on 30 September 1918, the Division was in the area of Tarnovo, Bulgaria. On 1 November it was ordered to move to Gallipoli to occupy the Dardanelles Forts. On 14 November, Divisional H.Q. opened at Chanak. 28th Division consisted of 83, 84 and 85 Infantry Brigades, with a mix of British and Indian units, the divisional artillery, engineers and support units. The Division was ordered to occupy the forts and defend localities on either side of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles.[4] 83 and 84 Brigades moved at once, followed by 85 Brigade and the divisional artillery in March 1919. 84 Brigade occupied the area of Cape Helles, Kilid Bahr and Gallipoli; 83 Brigade moved into

17.1 General Franchet d'Esperey on landing at Constantinople inspects the Guard of Honour. With him is Lieutenant General Sir H. F. M. Wilson, 8th February 1919 © IWM

17.2 Military policemen of the 28th Division in Constantinople regulating the tram service, 1919 © IWM

Kumkale, Cape Kephez and Chanak; 85 Brigade, a wholly British brigade, on arrival moved to the Bosphorus. With the arrival of 85 Brigade, the Divisional H.Q. and some detached units moved to Constantinople to guard key points and assist in controlling disorder. The division was reinforced by two New Zealand units, the 7th Light Horse and the Canterbury Mounted Rifles.[5] In early March 1919, there were 27,419 British soldiers in Turkey, supported by twenty-seven batteries of artillery and sixty ships of the Mediterranean Fleet; 19,000 French troops; 4,000 Italians and just under 1,000 Greeks. Throughout the period of the occupation there were, however, constant changes in both British (including Irish) and Indian units as battalions were returned home for disbandment or were redeployed elsewhere.

In May 1919, 84 Brigade, less one battalion, moved to Scutari and Kadikov;[6] orders were issued to divide Constantinople into three sections for the control of civil disorder: No 1 Section would be Pera and Galatea, under 85 Brigade; No 2 Section would be Stamboul, under 122nd French Division; and No 3 section, Scutari and Kadikov under 84 Brigade.[7] In June, three British battalions from the 22nd Division arrived and joined the divisional troops along with 2/23 Sikh Pioneers; an Italian battalion was taken under the 28th Division's command at Konia, east of Smyrna, in the Greek-occupied zone.

CORRESPONDENCE - WILSON (CIGS) TO MILNE (C-IN-C BRITISH BLACK SEA ARMY)

2nd December 1919

It is quite a long time since I wrote you a letter of gossip. I have been so sorry for you all these last few months because in spite to repeated and strenuous endeavours to get your position defined by the Paris authorities we have so far been quite unable to do it. ….

To me the whole peace proposals were based on false assumptions and were built on false foundations, and I am not in the least therefore surprised to see the whole fabric coming crashing down, and in my judgement the sooner is crashes the better we shall be because it will force us to return to realities and what you Scotch call 'verities'. It is an amusing state of affairs that after 12½ months of Armistice and 5 months after the signature of Peace, two or three months after the ratification of the same by England, France and Italy we are still unable to finish off the Peace with the Boches.

As regards the Turks as you know we have not even commenced to consider the terms of peace, and all this time we keep on interfering with everybody's business. Paris is now sending quite considerable forces to plebiscite areas - we have to furnish 11 battalions, some cavalry and guns - then we advise the Italians to give up Fiume, and advise Czechs to pass coal into Austria, and we advise the Poles not to fight the Lithuanians, and we advise the Roumanians not to fight the Hungarians on the one hand or Denikin on the other. If instead of spreading our energies all over Europe and doing nothing but irritating everybody thereby we devoted ourselves to governing our own countries we would I think be on much safer ground, but I confess that the present way of conducting an Empire fills me with alarm. I seem to see that the power of governing is slipping out of the hands of the English and that under ridiculous terms like 'devolution', 'self-determination', and so forth England is in reality saying, on the one hand to Ireland, on the other to Egypt, on yet another to India "I am sorry to have to tell you that I am quite incapable of governing you and under the title of devolution, federation, self-determination, sympathetic treatment, or some other nostrum you will be good enough to govern yourselves". If this is so it means the end of our Empire, because one thing is quite certain, if we cannot govern other people then other people will come and govern us; as they are doing; if we cannot govern the Egyptians then the Egyptians will govern us as they are commencing to do. Why the English who are by far the finest race in the world should suddenly begin to think that they have lost the art and power of governing I cannot imagine.

…. As you know, my wish and intention ever since the Armistice has been to pull our troops out of the scrum of Europe and concentrate them in areas which really belong to us; now I find myself being driven to Paris to send crowds of troops back into Central Europe on some fantastic scheme of plebiscite. It is enough to make an angel cry when we have not got anything like enough troops to go round our own possessions.

I see that you have a poor opinion of Denikin. I am not quite sure that in this you are right. To me he would indeed be a wise man if he was what the democrat calls a 'reactionary', because I think we have proof enough already that a democracy, even in a most enlightened country like the United States of America, is rather a broken reed, but a democracy in Russia is nothing short of a danger to the world, so that some form of autocracy in Russia will probably be the best for that unfortunate country. ….

I wish I could induce Downing Street and Paris to come to some reasonable terms with the Turks. It is a pitiable fact that after these eleven months we have not even begun to consider terms. Everything that we do so far as I can see tends to throw the old Turk into the arms of the Boches and the Bolshevists on the French! I have always thought that we were mad to allow, and indeed to encourage, Venizelos to go to Smyrna, and I am quite sure the old man would like to get out of it now if he could with any sort of credit because he has ruined himself and is going to ruin his country…

Operations

Gough-Calthorpe handed over his appointment to Admiral John de Robeck on 5 August 1919, by which time the signs of a growing Turkish national movement and the prominence of Kemal Ataturk was already apparent. Worse, a newly-elected Ottoman parliament in Constantinople refused to recognise the occupation, adopted a National Pact, and declared six principles which called for self-determination, the security of Constantinople, the opening of the Bosphorus and the renunciation of the capitulation to the Allies.

17.3 Stacks of rifles in the yard of the Arsenal, Constantinople © IWM

Unrest all over Anatolia persuaded the British in particular that Anatolian Turkey was not safe for Christians, who could only be secured by the enforcement of the (unratified) Treaty of Sèvres concluded in March 1920, which ceded Eastern Thrace and Smyrna to Greece and put the Allied occupation on a proper legal footing. Enforcing this, in turn, could only be carried out by suppressing the national movement. Milne was appointed as C-in-C Allied Occupation Forces in Turkey early in 1920. As such he also took command of a Greek brigade, as well as the French and Italian troops in Constantinople under Generals Georges Charpy and Ernesto Mombelli. Milne decided to dismantle systematically the nationalist organisation in Constantinople and then move into the Anatolia; it was also clear that the administration of the city was collapsing in the hands of local officials and needed considerable Allied assistance.

17.4 Turkish prisoners in Turkish prison courtyard with a British soldier. Turko-Grecian war © IWM

Operations began on 14 March 1920 with the seizure of the Telegraph station. Other key buildings, including the Ministry of Marine, the War Office and all telephone exchanges, were seized over the following days and key leaders among the Turkish nationalists were arrested. The Straits were closed and martial law imposed.[8] Some elements of the Turkish army resisted. On 16 March, Milne announced that the Allies had no intention of taking over the government, but were determined to keep the Straits open and to protect Christian minorities, especially the Armenians. On 18 March the parliament met and sent a protest to allies, following which it was dissolved, leaving the Sultan as sole ruler of the Empire and aligned with the British.

In April, in response to a formal British request, the Sultan's government appointed an Anatolian Inspector-General, Süleiman Sefik Pasha, with a new paramilitary force to implement government control with British support. The British also supplied local Christian and secular insurgent groups in Anatolia - the so-called 'independent armies' with money and weapons.

The Izmid Peninsula and Smyrna

On 15 October 1919, 83 Brigade under Brigadier-General F. Montague-Bates was warned to deploy to the Izmid peninsula on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, to prevent Turkish nationalist forces loyal to Mustafa Kemal from entering the neutral zones around the straits.[9] 4 November, Montague-Bates with the brigade headquarters and one Indian battalion was ordered to Smyrna where it was designated as 'Meander Force' - after the valley it was to occupy.[10] The brigade was back from Smyrna on 5 March 1920, and was reconstituted; on 8 March it moved into Constantinople and was ordered to Izmid, with a single battalion and support troops, on 27 March 1920.[11]

Almost as soon as Montague-Bates returned to Izmid, his battalion, 1/25th Punjabis, was surrounded by the Turkish 24th Division at Eskishehr and ordered by the Turks to withdraw. To relieve the Punjabis and reinforce the peninsula, a new brigade, 242 Infantry Brigade, was formed under Montague-Bates.[12] To reach the Punjabis, they had first to repair bridges destroyed by the Nationalists, and then, following the withdrawal, dropped again. As both 24th and 56th Turkish Divisions appeared to be

17.5 Officers of a British military mission in Smyrna, May 1919 © IWM

moving north along the only road in the area, to the Bilejik Pass, the Geyve Bridge was demolished. The Brigade constructed a formal defensive position with an outpost line, main line in three sectors and a reserve line, where contact was made with the Turks on 26/27 March. Here the Turks were stopped.

In June 1920, 242 Brigade was briefly placed under 28th Division's command, however in July, Major-General Edmund Ironside arrived from Archangel and took command of all troops in the Izmid peninsula, with the staff of 80 Infantry Brigade, withdrawn from Batum, as his headquarters. 242 Infantry Brigade came under his command along with 1 Gordons, 20th Hussars, two artillery batteries, a machine-gun company and the 16th Greek Regiment (three battalions). He was also allocated the bulk of 84 Brigade for a time, along with 10 Battery R.F.A.

Ironside's mission was 'to clean up and restore order' in the Ismid Peninsula; and link up with Greek troops along the southern coast. To achieve this, Ironside sent columns of mobile infantry and cavalry into the interior, searching every village and seizing all arms and ammunition that could be found in villages - although enough was left to enable Christian villages to defend themselves from Muslim atrocities. Explicit in the orders were that 'every band of brigands' - i.e. Turkish nationalists or criminals - was to be either destroyed or captured. Detachments from 85 Brigade were also sent across to the Asiatic shore to co-operate with the 2/4th Greek Archipelago Regiment on clearance operations along the coast.

The British used aerial bombing as well as ground operations against the nationalists and although the nationalists were forced back, Milne, and his successor Sir Charles (Tim) Harington, concluded that his forces were far too small to face down a resurgent Turkish Army; and there was no stomach at home for the deployment of a large force, even if such forces had been available following post-war demobilisation.

Greek forces had meanwhile advanced from Smyrna and fought a series of engagements with the Turks. By September 1921, a stalemate had been reached. Matters approached a head when in the autumn of 1922, the Greeks withdrew troops from Smyrna, demanding assistance from the French and British but in effect threatening Constantinople. A few Royal Marines were landed at Smyrna from the battleship King George V. By September, a major Turkish counter-attack destroyed all the Greeks' gains in Asia Minor and led to the evacuation of all Greek and Armenian troops and civilians, 250,000 people, from Smyrna, which ceased to be a Greek city after more than 2,000 years. After re-capturing Smyrna, Turkish forces moved north towards the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmara, and the Bosphorus. Other Turkish forces infiltrated Constantinople to organise resistance to the Allies in the city.

17.6 Royal Navy launch towing a cutter with Greek refugees to an awaiting ship in Smyrna harbour during the evacuation © IWM

Chanak

On 22 March 1922, the French and Italian troops withdrew from the neutral zones. With the need to fill these gaps as well as the threat from Turkish forces moving north from Smyrna up the Asiatic coast towards Chanak, British Forces in Turkey were reorganised. The Command was renamed British Forces in Turkey - no longer the British Army of Occupation; 28th Division was reformed under Major-General Thomas Marsden, with 83 and 84 Brigades under his command. 83 Brigade was to be located in the former French sector of Stamboul, with a battalion detached to Chanak; 84 Brigade was to be located at Haider Pasha with a battalion in the former Italian sector of Scutari. 85 Brigade became an independent brigade under the C-in-C's command, responsible for the Bosphorus defences and Pera. The Dardanelles Sector Defence Force, commanded by

17.7 HMS *Centaur* C-class light cruiser at Smyrna © IWM

Brigadier-General P.P. de Berry, was placed directly under the C-in-C's (Harington's) command, with four infantry battalions, a cavalry squadron and two artillery brigades; and the reinforced 242 Brigade remained in Izmid. In support were the ships of the Mediterranean fleet, whose firepower underpinned viability of the occupation.[13]

As the threat from Mustafa Kemal's troops approaching Chanak developed, 28th Division was ordered there, arriving on 26 March. 83 Brigade was ordered to form an outpost line covering the approaches to Chanak from the south, with 84 Brigade covering to the north. A stand-off developed with the troops of the Turkish VI Corps, with Marsden trying to avoid a general engagement and stave off incidents. On 24 September, Mustafa Kemal's troops moved into the neutral straits zones and refused British requests to leave: for a time, war between Britain and Turkey seemed possible, but the British cabinet was divided on the matter with the Conservatives in the coalition government refusing to follow Liberal Prime Minister David Lloyd George and Secretary of State for War Winston Churchill, who were in favour of war. The government called for military support from the Empire but the response, with the exception of New Zealand, was negative - the first time that Canada had taken a separate position from Britain. The French and Italians also declined to offer support. It was this setback that led to Lloyd George's fall from office.

The Final Months and Withdrawal

Harington was no more in favour of war than his allies and warned the British government against any precipitate action. He ordered restraint from his own forces: on 7 October 1922, he tried to lower tensions by giving orders that no additional troops should be landed on the Asiatic shore. He also obliged the Greek fleet to leave Constantinople. The British also forced the Greeks to evacuate eastern Thrace where the Xanthe Division was under Harington's command. On 11 October 1922, a convention was signed establishing the conference at Lausanne which was to determine the future of the region and replace the Treaty of Sèvres. This was enough to persuade Mustafa Kemal to accept the opening of armistice talks. The war diaries note that the Turks became 'less aggressive' and on 13 October began to pull back. The Armistice of Mudanya was concluded on 15 October 1922, under which the Allies retained control of eastern Thrace and the Bosphorus. It was not until 9 July 1923, however, that word was received that the Armistice was to be replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne, concluded on 23 July 1923, the old Treaty of Sèvres having no longer any basis in reality. A significant provision was an exchange of population: over one million Greek Orthodox Christians were displaced; most of them were resettled in Greece, including the newly acquired Greek territories of Macedonia and Western Thrace; Eastern Thrace and Smyrna having reverted to Turkish control. At least 500,000 Muslims were displaced from the Greek territories and resettled in Asia Minor.

On 1 November 1922, the Turkish Grand National Assembly abolished the sultanate and subsequently established a new republic with its capital in Ankara. On 17 November 1922, Mehmed VI Vahideddin, the last Ottoman Sultan, left Constantinople on board H.M.S. *Malaya*. Allied forces began evacuating Constantinople under the terms of the new treaty on 23 August 1923 and the evacuation was completed on 23 September 1923. Turkish troops entered the city on 6 October 1923.

The Trans-Caucasia Introduction

Following the formulation of its policy towards the new Russia in December 1917, The British government opened negotiations in south Russia and Trans-Caucasia with the White leaders General

17.8 Soldiers of the Staffordshire Regiment with mules and donkeys near Menjil © IWM

Anton Denikin (see the Chapter on Northern Russia), Pyotr Nikolayevich Wrangel and Alexei Maximovich Kaledin, Ataman of the Don Cossacks. The General Staff began to send officers to help organise and train local forces in these emerging republics. Early reports were not encouraging: recruiting for the White Volunteers was slow, local forces were hard pressed by the Reds and there was a lack of money and supplies of all kinds.

The French had also started operations in South Russia, mainly in support of Romania which was being hard pressed by the Germans and Austrians. An Anglo-French Convention was therefore called in Paris on 23 December 1917 and Southern Russia was divided into spheres of influence: the British would take the Cossack territory and the French would take Bessarabia, Ukraine and the Crimea. Operations were, at this stage, to be directed against the Central Powers and fighting with the Bolshevists was to be avoided.[14] The governments of Finland, the Baltic States, Ukraine and in Trans-Caucasia were to be supported, but not yet recognised.

In Trans-Caucasia, a Russian provisional government had been established in March 1917 but on 5 December, a new government, the Transcaucasian Commissariat, or Sejm, was declared. This Committee concluded the Armistice of Erzincan with the Ottoman Third Army. While a number of Russian troops went to Persia, General Nikolai Baratov and Colonel (later General) Lazar Bicharakhov, remained at Hamadan and Kermanshah with 10,000 men. By the beginning of February 1918, Kaledin was dead and the Don front had collapsed. Here and elsewhere, British agents blew up bridges, railways and ammunition depots before the advancing German and Austrian armies. In Novorossisk on the Black Sea, Bolshevist sailors were bribed to scuttle their ships, which included two Dreadnoughts as well as thirty-six other vessels. By August 1917 the Germans controlled Ukraine and the northern coast of the Black Sea, while the Turks were advancing into the Caucasus where they were resisted by the Armenians; the Georgians opted for German help against the Reds. Matters did not look rosy for the Allies.

17.9 Major-General Dunsterville G. O. C. Dunsterforce, and Commodore Norris R. N. on the Caspian © IWM

British Operations and the Dunsterforce in the Trans-Caucasus region - 1918

A small British military mission had been established at Tiflis under Colonel Geoffrey Pike, but with the prospect of a German contingent arriving on the scene this had to be moved to Vladikavkav in Daghestan where it continued to operate until Pike was killed and the remaining members captured by the Bolshevists. However, a larger mission known as 'Dunsterforce', after its commander, Brigadier-General Lionel Dunsterville, set out on 27 January 1918 from Baghdad in Mesopotamia, via Persia - some 800 miles (1,200 kilometres) away. Originally this consisted of 400 British officers and N.C.O.s who would organise and lead the new Trans-Caucasian forces in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. On 24 February 1918 the Sejm had declared the independence of the (anti-Bolshevist) Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic. Dunsterville was ordered to keep the Caucasus-Tabriz front intact in order to prevent Turkish advances into the region.[15] The main focus of British interest was the important Baku oilfields, a matter on which Dunsterville was in no doubt.[16]

Dunsterville made it as far as Enzeli on the Caspian coast, where onward movement was blocked by local Bolshevist forces. In the meantime, on 6 June, the Red Commissar in Baku, Grigory Korganov, ordered Bolshevist forces to begin an offensive against the Turks and at the same time, the fledgling government of Azerbaijan, unable to defend itself from the Reds, asked for help from the Turks. The Ottoman Army of the Caucasus under Nuri Pasha therefore began to advance. This was a formidable force, consisting of the 5th, 10th and 15th Infantry Divisions and the Azerbaijani Muslim Corps under General Ali-Agha Shiklinski. Between 27 June and 1 July, Nuri Pasha defeated the Red Army in battle near Goychay and moved on Baku.

Dunsterforce had, meanwhile, been expanded. On 21 May 1918, information from London suggested that a display of military strength in Persia would prompt the government in Tehran to support the British. Lieutenant General Sir William Marshall, C-in-C British forces in Mesopotamia, was directed to maintain an infantry brigade, cavalry regiment, armoured cars and aircraft at Hamadan, with the intention of moving this force towards the Caspian. On 1 July 1918, 39 Infantry Brigade from the 13th (Western) Division, in Mesopotamia,[17] and No 72 Squadron R.A.F. received orders to join this force, now called the North Persia Force, and it moved north-west between 10 June and 19 July, joined by Australian, New Zealand and Canadian volunteers drawn from units on the Western Front. The force moved first by land to Kazvin. Here they joined forces with Bicharakhov's troops, who moved north accompanied by a squadron of the 14th Hussars and some armoured cars, with aircraft in support. On the way, a series of engagements had to be fought with Jangali tribesmen who were reinforced by a few German and Austrian soldiers; the Jangalis also attacked British troops in Resht and it was not until the middle of July that they were subdued.

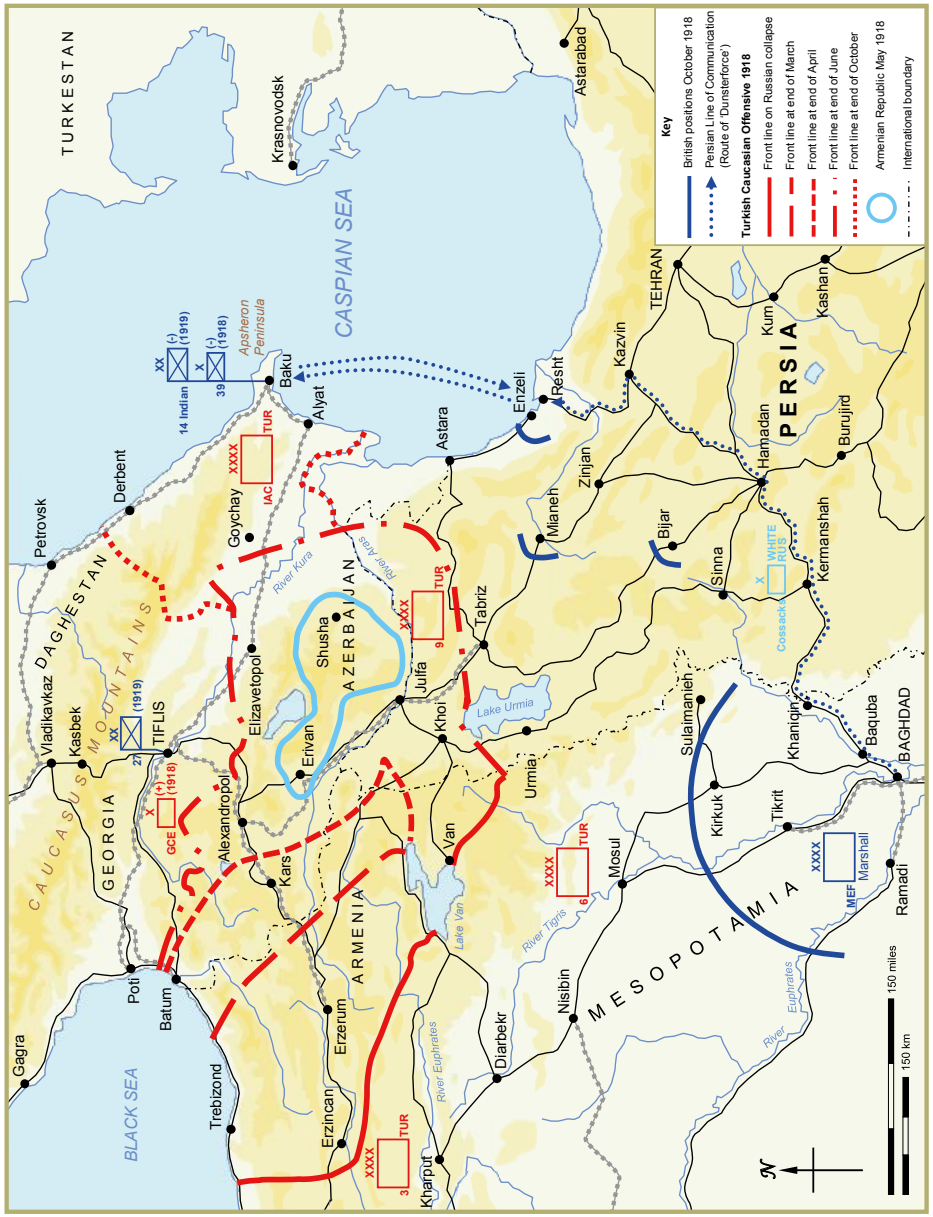
Bichakharov meanwhile had gone over to the Reds and taken command of Bolshevist forces astride the Tiflis railway line; however his troops were unable to stand up to the Turks and he was quickly forced to withdraw into Baku. Here, on 30 July, a new government, the Central Caspian Dictatorship, threw out the Reds and asked for help from the British. Dunsterville, having arrested the local Bolshevist leaders in Enzeli, embarked part of his force in the S.S. *Tuga*, and sailed up the Caspian Sea to Baku. The advance elements landed on 4 August 1918; some aircraft from No 72 Squadron arrived on 18 August; HQ 39 Brigade arrived on 24 August with the North Staffords, a detachment from the 1/4th Hampshires, some field artillery and two armoured cars. Dunsterforce had just forestalled the Turkish main body's arrival, but was massively outnumbered by the advancing Ottoman force of 14,000 Turks, 7,000 Azerbaijanis, 500 cavalry and forty guns.

The local forces in Baku numbered about 6,000 Armenian Christians and Russians, and about forty pieces of artillery, under the command of the former Tsarist General Dokuchaev. On 17 August, Dokuchaev attacked the Turks at Digah, one mile to the north of Baku, supported by British troops, intending to block off the approaches to the Apsheron Peninsula on which Baku is situated and seizing Novkhani; however without proper artillery support, the attack failed. The British and Baku forces dug in on high ground to the north and west of Baku, around the villages of Digah and Bingadi where on 26 August, the Turks attacked. Although the attack was held, the defenders were eventually pushed closer to the city. Ottoman losses however had been heavy and Nuri Pasha was not able to exploit his limited success. Dunsterville was by now considering withdrawal, however the pleading of the locals and the arrival of 600 Cossacks from Bichakharov, who had captured Petrovsk and again changed sides, persuaded him to stay longer. Dunsterville had hoped that the arrival of the British troops would encourage the local forces to fight, but the reverse was the case and the local forces took the view that the British would defend them and they need not, therefore, bother themselves too much.[18] On 14 September 1918, the Turks over-ran the Wolf's Gate, west of Baku, from which the whole peninsula, the city, the port and its shipping could be dominated. Having suffered 300 casualties, Dunsterville decided to evacuate Baku, and withdrew from Kazvin to Enzeli, followed by 50,000 Assyrian Christian refugees, and the Turks entered soon afterwards.

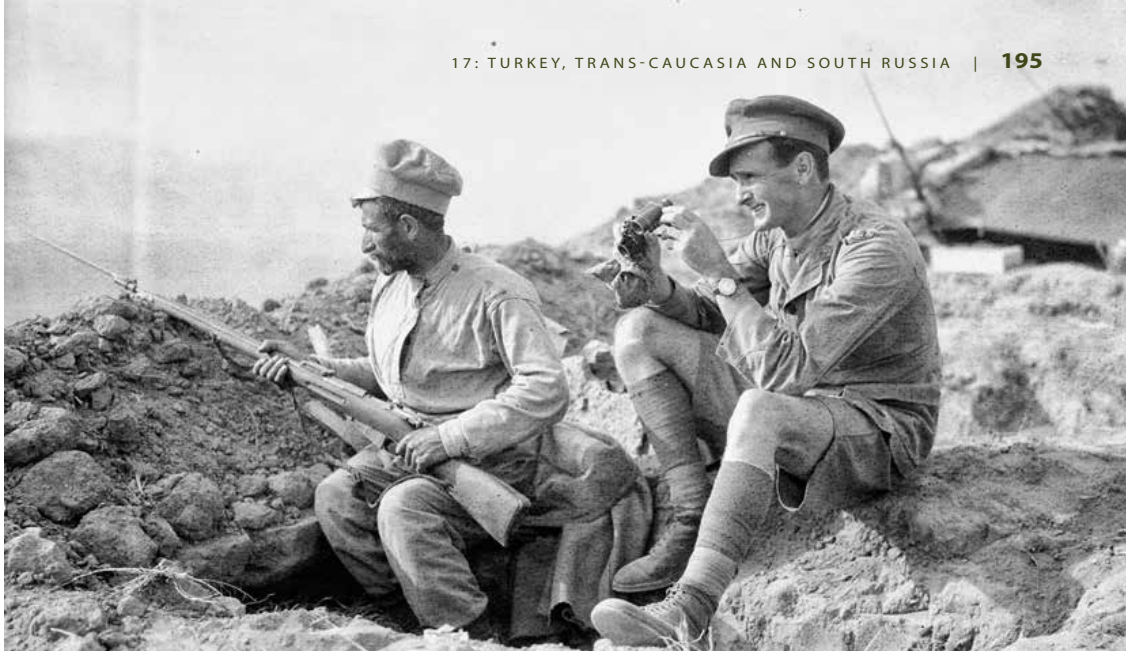
The rest of 39 Brigade had remained at Enzeli, Kazvin and Resht, with a detachment at Krasnovodsk, where the troops from Baku rejoined it following the evacuation. Strong Turkish attacks had been held off for a while by British and Persian troops near Kazvin, but eventually the British were forced to withdraw. It was the arrival of Dunsterforce from Enzeli that stabilised the situation. Dunsterforce was disbanded shortly afterwards but 39 Brigade remained in situ until 30 October 1918, when hostilities ceased with Turkey following the Armistice of Mudros. This intervention in some ways had achieved the worst of all worlds: the Central Powers were not stopped, the locals felt betrayed and the Bolshevists saw evidence of Allied hostility.

British Policy and Strategy following the Armistice

After the signing of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Allied operations began to focus as much on the Bolshevists as on the Central Powers. The sudden collapse of Turkey, Germany and Austria, and the Armistice in November 1918, fundamentally changed



Map 17.2 Transcaucasia 1918-20



17.10 A British officer serving alongside an Armenian infantryman, Baku, 1918 © IWM

British policy towards Russia, since the presence of Allied troops could no longer be explained as part of the war against the Central Powers. The British were, de facto if not de jure, at war with Bolshevism. Winston Churchill, now Secretary of State for War, demanded a clear Russia policy: either clear out, or take determined action against the Reds. The C.I.G.S., General Sir Henry Wilson, was charged with presenting a paper to the cabinet - *Note by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff on the present military situation in Russia with a proposal as to the best military action possible under the circumstances.* [See full Note in Chapter 16, North Russia - Editor]. This he did, offering three options: first, a complete withdrawal, and a reliance on buffer states to hold Bolshevism at bay. This was rejected, as the Bolshevists were felt to be too strong to hold on without large numbers of British troops, which were simply not available; secondly, Wilson proposed to conquer the Bolshevists by a massive military intervention. The lack of resources made this option unrealistic. The third option, which was accepted, was the Britain would support the Whites with military supplies but withdraw its troops as soon as anti-Bolshevist forces were capable of holding their own.

In the short term, however, there was a need for action as a Bolshevist invasion of Trans-Caucasia and even Persia would threaten India. The Cabinet therefore agreed to send a mission to Denikin to organise military aid to his army. In addition it was decided to take over the Transcaucasian Railway connecting the Black and Caspian seas.[19] These piecemeal commitments cannot be seen as the coherent policy that Churchill sought: rather, they enmeshed the British Army and the Royal Navy more deeply in the Russian Civil War. The British could not commit to large scale operations against the Bolshevists, but nor could they stomach the thought of a Communist Russia. What they did was commit to a middle course full of contradictions and improperly resourced.

British Operations in Trans-Caucasia 1919-1920

Earlier, on 30 September 1918, Bulgaria had concluded an armistice and hostilities ceased. Major-General George Forestier-Walker's 27th Infantry Division,[20] which had advanced from Salonika, had reached Krupnik at the end of October. On 2 November the division was ordered to move back down the Struma to the Orlyak area where it remained until it embarked in December for the Black Sea. Constantinople was reached on 19 November, and 80 Brigade, with 1 Brigade R.F.A. (an R.F.A. brigade was what we would now call a regiment - ie usually three gun batteries), arrived in Batum on 22 December. [21] On 19 January 1919, Forestier-Walker set up his headquarters in the Georgian capital of Tiflis, the Germans having withdrawn, and his Division occupied a series of strong-points along the Trans-Caucasian Railway. Other forces were sent to Kasbeh to stop the Bolshevists from moving on Tiflis. By 31 January 1919 the last shipload of the Division disembarked at Batum. News of a big victory by Denikin was reported on 22 March and this meant that the Vladikavkav area was secure and the Kasbeh force unnecessary.[22] By May, other detachments had been sent to Baku, Krasnovodsk, Petrovsk, Shusha, Julfa, Yerevan, Kars, Tiflis, Batum, and Gagra. Thus both Georgia and Azerbaijan were soon firmly under British control. In parallel, the French had landed troops in the Ukraine and the Crimea by the end of December. These moves effectively stopped Bolshevist moves into the Trans-Caucasia region and hastened the collapse of the two principal Red Armies, the Eleventh and Twelfth.

In September 1918, General Sir George Milne was given command of all forces in Trans-Caucasia and South Russia as Commander-in-Chief of the Black Sea Army, from his G.H.Q. in Constantinople.

17.11 A parade of horse-drawn guns in a British demonstration of force in Baku, July 1919 © IWM

By late November 1918, two infantry divisions were ordered to join Milne in Trans-Caucasia. Elements of the 14th Indian Division arrived at Enzeli from North Persia under Major-General William Thompson, and here it took command of 39 Infantry Brigade. 14th Division consisted of 35, 37 and 56 Infantry Brigades with a mix of Indian and British troops, four artillery batteries and divisional troops. The division also commanded the units manning the Persian line of communication.[23] 14th Division received units from the disbanding 22nd Division from 1 April 1919.[24]

On 15 November 1919, Thompson embarked 1,000 British and 800 Indian soldiers and police, with representatives of the Allied powers, in the ships *Kruger, Tula* and *Evelina*. The force disembarked at Baku on 17 November, where a guard of honour welcomed the Allied forces on the quayside. By mid January, Thompson's force had risen to 5,000 men including 2,000 policemen. Thompson moved rapidly to secure the Baku oilfields.

The Allies' problem in the Trans-Caucasus during 1919 was not so much the Reds, as growing inter-communal violence based on ancient ethnic and religious hatreds between Georgians, Azerbaijanis and Armenians. An exasperated Milne reported that the 'so-called' Trans-Caucasian republics did not deserve either Britain's attention or her efforts. On 16 March 1919, 39 Brigade was transferred to the 27th Division's command and in June, the government decided to withdraw completely from the region. On 13 August orders were issued to evacuate Baku. The move by train to Batum began on 15 August, and the evacuation of Baku was completed by the evening of 24 August. On 7 December, the 27th Division's H.Q. opened at Batum. The division was disbanded on 24 September, when the G.O.C. and his staff left for Constantinople, handing over to the newly appointed military governor of Batum, Brigadier-General W. J. N. Cooke-Collis, Commander 80 Infantry Brigade. On 4 March 1920, Cooke-Collis was appointed to command all Allied troops at Batum until their withdrawal at around 14 July 1920 when the final two Indian battalions, one British battalion, and the H.Q. of 80 Infantry Brigade were relocated to Constantinople.[25]

The British Military Missions in South Russia, 1918 - 1920

The withdrawal from Batum left only the military missions as the remnant of British presence in the region outside Constantinople. A much larger military mission was sent to General Anton Denikin, led initially by Lieutenant Colonel A.P. Blackwood, which arrived in the Kuban in late November 1918.[26] Brigadier-General J.S.J. Percy later assumed command, with Brigadier-General T.H. Keyes representing the British High Commissioner for South Russia. Denikin demanded immediate and substantial

17.12 British artillery officers training gunners of the III Don Corps (White Russian) on British-made 18 pounders field artillery guns in Novocherkassk, June 1919 © IWM

Map 17.3 South Russia 1918-20

materiel assistance and the backing of the Allies for him to assume overall command of all White troops. These comprised the Volunteer Army and several Cossack forces. The scale of assistance supplied thereafter through the British Mission to Denikin was enormous: the 200,000 strong White Army received far more equipment and supplies than it could ever possibly use, as can be seen by the amount of materiel that was saved and re-issued later, along with a force of 2,000 British troops to stiffen the Whites and provide training. Among the aid sent were six tanks, crewed and fought by British officers and men. These were detached to join the White Army of the Caucasus under Wrangel. The tanks proved decisive in penetrating the Bolshevist defences at Tsaritsyn - one of the Tank Corps' finest achievements.[27]

Artillery and machine-gun instructors also served in action with White Russian troops. Although they had been sent as trainers, they found their non-combatant role humiliating and could not but join their pupils in the face of danger.

The Royal Air Force was also tasked to train Denikin's aviation arm and supply it with British aircraft. No 47 Squadron arrived from Salonika in May 1919 along with the instructor pilots and a total of forty aircraft, mostly DH-9s. However it was not long before the R.A.F. had taken on most of the combat duties.

During 1919, Lloyd George became increasingly anxious about operations in Russia, not least because of growing anti-interventionist feelings at home. As early as February, he had proposed to the French and Italian governments that all parties exercising political or military power in the former Russian Empire should be invited to a negotiation at Prinkipo near Constantinople; however it proved impossible to get agreement from all the parties and the conference never took place. As the year progressed, White efforts waned as the Bolshevists grew in strength. In September 1919 Churchill was instructed to organise a final shipment of supplies to General Denikin, but this only delayed what had become inevitable. After several defeats

17.13 Major Hudleston Williamson, an officer of the British Military Mission to South Russia © IWM

in November and December which led to the fragmentation of the Cossacks and the Volunteer armies, the White forces in South Russia began in-fighting: the Kuban Cossacks made for home and the Volunteers began to disintegrate. The only thing that now slowed the Red advance was its own supply and transport problems and the activities of peasant partisans.

Evacuation of the Whites to Crimea

By February 1920, Denikin had withdrawn the last elements of his army to the more defensible Crimea, something for which the British Mission had begun to prepare well in advance. In January, 2/4th Ghurkhas and the 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers in Constantinople had been warned for deployment to Novorossisk to assist the Mission.[28] Much of the detail of this period cannot be traced, as the war diaries and other documents were lost during fighting around Taganrog in January.[29] Defences were organised to protect the evacuation from Novorossisk and the British assumed command of the operation as experience had shown that White troops under pressure could not be trusted to obey orders.[30] The evacuation turned out to be the most trying task the British undertook: 50,000 refugees were moved to the Crimea in British ships along with thousands of wounded White soldiers; however there were perhaps half a million refugees in all and it was impossible to organise transport for them all; no-one knows how many subsequently perished. As well as attacks by the Bolshevists, the British were also attacked by 'Greens', anti-Communist peasant militias who were bolstered by White deserters: at one point, H.M.S. *Benbow* destroyed a village with 15-inch gunfire after a British sergeant was badly wounded by sniper fire. The final stages of the evacuation turned into a nightmare. White troops did not attempt to defend the city, but poured into the port along with masses of civilians. The commander of the British garrison, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Edmund Hakewill-Smith of the 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers, thought that the city could have been defended, but the heart had gone out of the Whites.

What was saved was a good deal of the equipment provided by the British and this was re-issued to White troops in the Crimea, now commanded by Wrangel following the resignation of Denikin on 1 April 1920. Brigadier-General Percy established liaison detachments at Simferopol, Kerch and Djankol in the Crimea and from these, over 38,000 rifles, 202 artillery pieces, 863 machine guns, twenty-five tanks, ninety-seven mortars and 71 million rounds of ammunition were passed over.[31] Wrangel also received twenty-nine shiploads of materiel, food and fuel between the end of March and the end of June 1920 from British ships, under the protection of Admiral Sir John de Robeck's ships from the Mediterranean Fleet in the Black Sea. The British also continued to train the White army with a view to making it self-reliant rather than using British assistance.

On 7 June 1920, Wrangel's troops launched a major attack out of the Crimea, wearing British uniforms and carrying British equipment. This turned out to be a major embarrassment as the British government was now engaged in trade negotiations with the Bolshevists. The British Mission therefore came to an end in June 1920 when orders were sent to Harington and de Robeck to cease all further assistance and withdraw. Percy turned over all remaining materiel to the Whites and on 27 June the last officers and men left Sevastopol on board de Robeck's ships. Only four officers and eight NCOs were left as observers. At about the same time, between April 1920 and February 1921, Red Army troops entered and subdued the fledgling republics of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, which were incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1922.

Commentary

The intervention in Russia and the Caucasus must be regarded as a complete failure. In spite of the vast tonnages of equipment and the bravery of the small numbers of trainers supplied by the British, no substantial armed help had been given to the anti-Bolshevik forces; in fact, when the White Russians were making their best showing, the U.S. and Canadian contingents were being withdrawn from North Russia. Allied policy was singularly lacking in effectiveness and no concerted measures emerged. The new republics of Trans-Caucasia descended into in-fighting and were rapidly swallowed by the Red Army. Yet it is possible to claim some far-reaching results. Intervention had delayed the Bolshevik victory and there was thus time for Finland, the Baltic States and Poland to establish their independence; and Persia remained out of Soviet control. The frontier of Bolshevism was therefore stopped from advancing westward until the close of the Second World War.

The occupation of Constantinople likewise achieved little but to antagonise the Turks, without securing the Christian populations of Asia Minor, Eastern Thrace or Armenia. Turkey was permitted to retain Constantinople and control of the straits; on the other hand it emerged from the war on the path to becoming a modern, secular state.

The Battlefields Today

The Trans-Caucasus region can barely be regarded as a 'battlefield', since apart from the defence of Baku, no major engagements took place. Baku can now be reached by commercial flights although visas are needed. Given the geopolitical situation, the Crimea is now beyond reach for tourism. Constantinople, Turkey in Europe and Asia Minor remain, at the time of writing, easily reached by normal tourist traffic and the areas where the engagement at Izmid and the confrontation at Chanak took place can still be discerned.

The Haider Pasha C.W.G.C. cemetery in Constantinople contains 407 burials from the Great War, including those who died during the occupation. The war memorial in the Haider Pasha lists forty-one men of the Military Mission, thirteen of the R.A.F. and eighteen Royal Navy personnel killed in South Russia between 1918 and 1920, thirty of whose graves are not known. It also lists ninety-eight officers and men killed in South Russia and Trans-Caucasia, whose graves are known but can no longer be maintained. In addition, the cremation memorial lists 122 Indian soldiers of the Hindu faith who died between 1919 and 1920 in Turkey. All the dead whose graves are known but are not buried here, are in the cemeteries in Rostov, Batum, Tehran, Novorossisk, Chanak Consular Cemetery and Ekaterinodar. A memorial in Baku lists forty-seven officers and men killed in the fighting there in 1918.

Further Reading

The British involvement in the Black Sea region is as little covered in the literature of the Great War as is North Russia. The Official Histories conclude with the Armistice and the best account of operations by Dunsterforce is in the history of the R.A.F. There are some good modern secondary sources which supplement the contemporary accounts and these are listed below:

Bilge Criss, *Constantinople under Allied Occupation 1918-1923* (London: 1999)

Major-General L. C. Dunsterville C.B., *The Adventures of Dunsterforce* (London: 1920).

Paul G. Halpern: *The Mediterranean Fleet, 1919-1929*, (London: 2011).

Lauri Kopisto, *The British Intervention in South Russia 1918-1920*, unpublished dissertation, University of Helsinki: 2011.

Artin Hagop Arslanian, *The British Military Involvement in Transcaucasia* (University of Michigan, 2011).

H.A. Jones, *The War in the Air; Being the Part Played in the Great War by the Royal Air Force*, Volume VI (Oxford: 1937).

Endnotes

References: The electroncic version (DVD) has the full list of notes.

1. 'Constantinople occupied by British and Indian troops', British Pathé, 30-31 October 1918, retrieved 15 March 2015.
2. A copy of the terms is in T.N.A. WO 95/4901.
3. Inter-Allied Commission, 10 February 1919.
4. T.N.A. WO 95/4901 General Staff HQ 28th Division October 1918 - November 1920, Order No 75 dated 1 November 1918.
5. Major A.F. Becke, *History of the Great War: Order of Battle of Divisions, Part 1: The Regular British Divisions,* (H.M.S.O., 1934).
6. The War Diary of 84 Infantry Brigade is in T.N.A. WO 95/4916.
7. T.N.A. WO 95/4901 General Staff HQ 28th Division October 1918 - November 1920.
8. T.N.A. WO 95/4901 General Staff HQ 28th Division October 1918 - November 1920.
9. The War Diary of 83 Infantry Brigade is in T.N.A. WO 95/4913.
10. GS Ops 1415/G 3 Nov 1919 in T.N.A. WO 95/4901.
11. GS 781/17 in T.N.A. WO 95/4901.
12. The order is GS 790/1, 20 March 1920 in T.N.A. WO 95/4901. The War Diary of 242 Brigade is in T.N.A. WO 95/4925; the brigade included 1/2 Rajputs, 1/10 Jats, and 54 Bty R.F.A. He was also to take 1/25 Punjabis under command and was later reinforced by 1/54 Sikhs.
13. T.N.A. WO 95/4964, General Staff 28th Division, Occupation of Turkey September 1922 - August 1923.
14. The Convention is printed in Documents on British Foreign Policy, Series I, vol III, p 369 - 370.
15. The War Diary of the mission is in T.N.A. WO 95/5042.
16. Major-General L. C. Dunsterville C.B., *The Adventures of Dunsterforce* (London, 1920), p 140 - 141.
17. 39 Brigade consisted of the following units: 9th (S) Warwicks; 7th (S) Glosters; 9th (S) Worcesters; 7th (S) North Staffords; 1st/4th Hampshires (-); 39th Company, MGC; 39th Supply & Transport Column, ASC; and 39th Trench Mortar Battery.
18. H.A. Jones, *The War in the Air; Being the Part Played in the Great War by the Royal Air Force,* Volume VI (Oxford, 1937), p 253.
19. T.N.A. CAB 23/8, Minutes of the War Cabinet, 14 November 1918.
20. 27th Division consisted of 80, 81 and 82 Infantry Brigades with divisional artillery, cavalry, engineers and support troops.
21. T.N.A. WO 95/4881 27th Divisional Artillery War Diary, January - May 1919.
22. T.N.A. WO 95/4881 27th Divisional Artillery War Diary, January - May 1919.
23. T.N.A. WO 95/5165, General Staff 14th Indian Division, January 1918 - February 1919.
24. T.N.A. WO 95/4841, General Staff 22nd Division, January - March 1919. Other units and staff officers were sent to the Occupation Force in Constantinople and to the 27th Division.
25. GS 781/2 8 February 1920 in T.N.A. WO 95/4901.
26. The War Diary (incomplete) of the Mission is in T.N.A. WO 95/4959 and 4960.
27. Basil Liddell Hart, *The Tanks. The History of the Royal Tank Regiment and its predecessors, Heavy Branch Machine-Gun Corps, Tank Corps and Royal Tank Corps 1914-1945*, Vol 1, (London, 1959), p 211.
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29. Note in T.N.A. WO 95/4960.
30. T.N.A. WO 95/4959, War Diary BMM South Russia, 20 February 1920.
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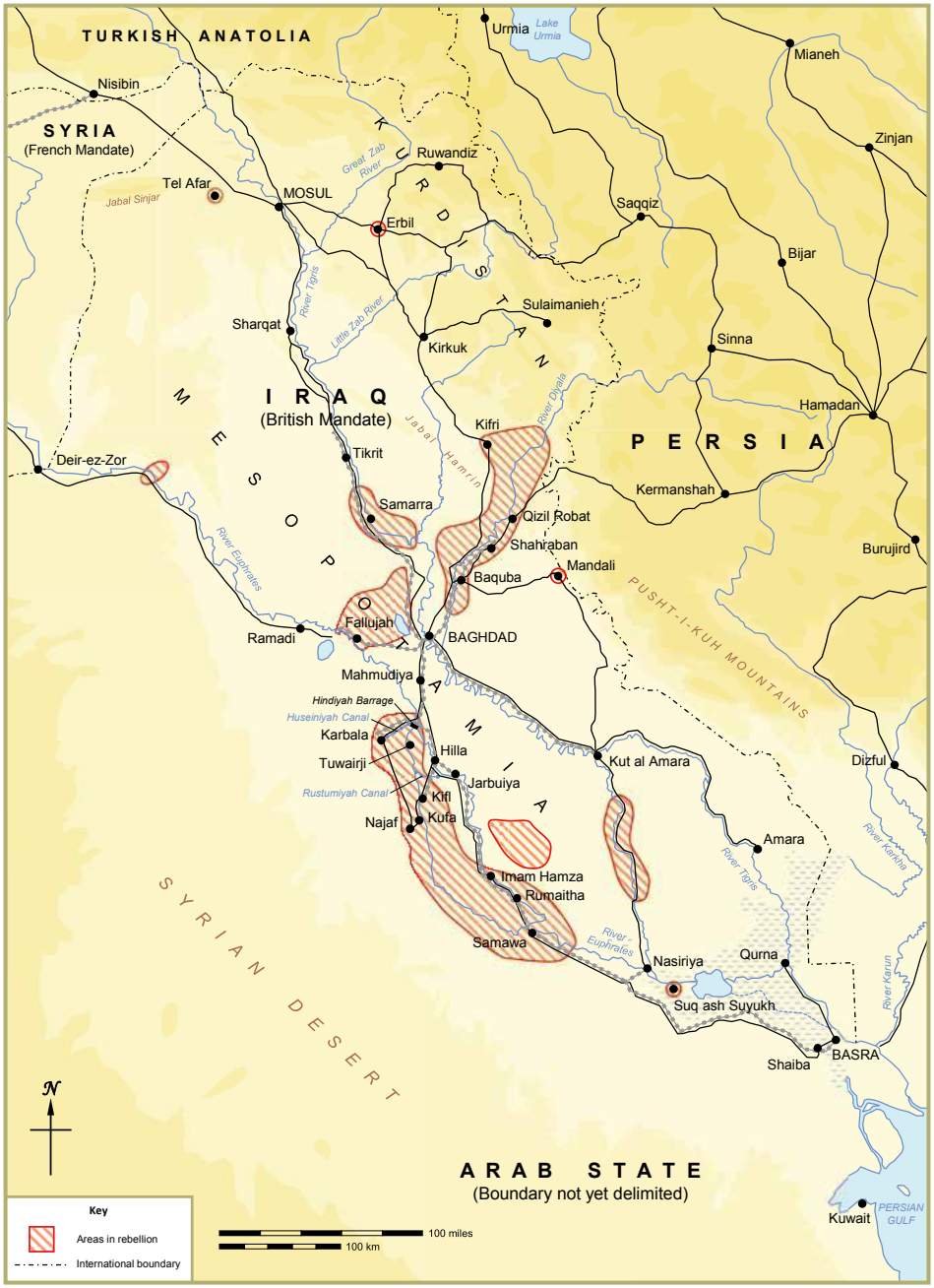


Map 18.1 The Iraq Revolt, 1920

18. The Iraq Revolt - 1920

Dr Robert Johnson

The Nature of the Occupation of Mesopotamia

The occupation of Mesopotamia continued after the Great War. It was administered by the military authority as an enemy territory until the establishment of British civil government under Sir Arnold Wilson. This arrangement disappointed Arabs, who had hoped for independence, and the San Remo Conference (1920), which made the new state of Iraq a Mandate territory, that is, a territory governed on behalf of Iraqis by Britain, sparked mass demonstrations. Iraqis feared that, despite wartime assurances of liberation, the British intended to turn Iraq into a colony. Protests were led by prominent religious figures and orchestrated by former Ottoman Army officers and tribal elders. These protests were emboldened when it became evident that British troops were being withdrawn and demobilised after the Great War. To make matters worse, the British government regarded Iraq as less important than the control of Persia, since Persia was a bulwark against the spread of communism into British India.

The initial wartime operations in Mesopotamia had been orchestrated by the British Government of India and carried out by the Indian Army. In 1916, however, it was the War Office in London that took control. In 1918, after the war, a large proportion of the garrison was nevertheless made up of Indian troops and the civil administrative functions were carried out with personnel drawn from the Indian Civil Service (ICS). As a result, the approach to governance was for British Political Officers, either ICS men or army officers given the role of administrator, to run towns, cities and their hinterlands, protected by small contingents of British and Indian troops. Naturally this penny-packeting of military power, while offering a physical presence and thus a form of deterrence, was unsound from a tactical point of view. In essence it meant the British forces were weak everywhere should there be a significant rising.

This problem might not have been so acute had there been sufficient mobility for the troops. Provided with transport, the various detachments might easily have been concentrated or reinforced. Unfortunately they were not. There were too few mobile reserves. Of the total force of 60,200 men, only 7,200 were British personnel. Given the unhealthy environment, half of these were either sick or in transit. All units and formations, while strong on paper, had been hollowed out by post-war demobilisation and lack of replacements. Most British infantry battalions numbered less than 500 and the majority were young men who had not seen service in the war. Some Indian infantry battalions were down to 240 men. Artillery batteries possessed only two guns. One British cavalry regiment could muster just 200 sabres. Trained machine gun crews were in short supply, as were drivers and vehicle mechanics. The proportion of officers was also lower than usual, since many were tasked with administering the Iraqis. Air cover was also hard to find. The R.A.F. could guarantee only six airworthy aircraft at any one time, and although there were two squadrons, there was a shortage of spares and technicians to keep the planes flying. There were no transport aircraft, and, until the uprising broke out, no bombers.

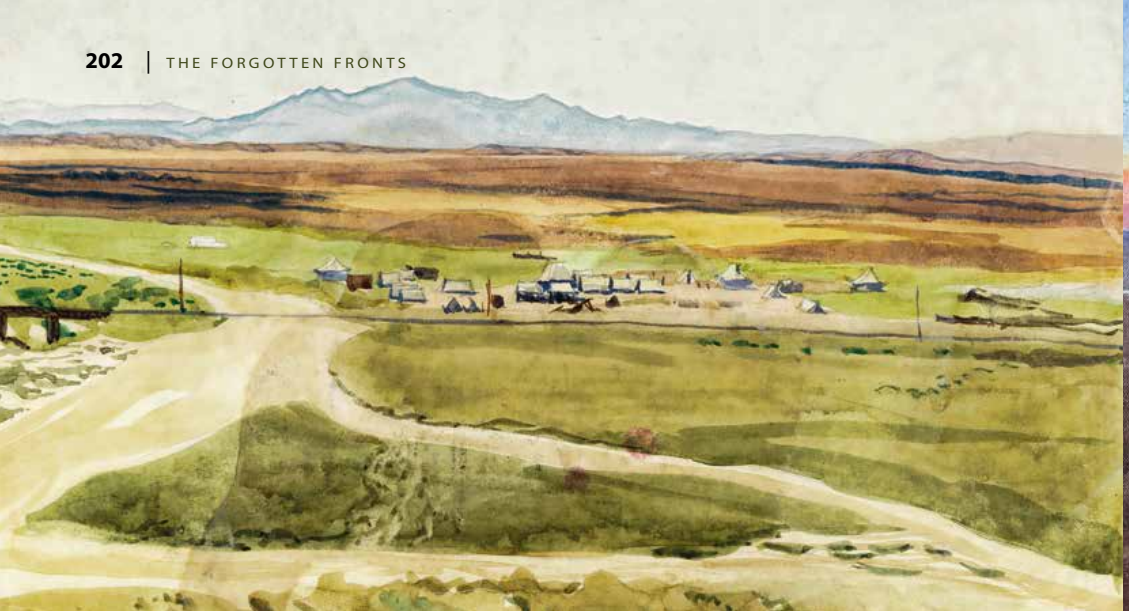
Winston Churchill, the Secretary of State for War, advised the GOC Mesopotamia, Major-General Sir George MacMunn, to find economies in the cost of the garrison. He urged him to 'organise levies and try to get the troops home as soon as possible'. Churchill was concerned that the ratio of troops to the task was higher than in India, and at higher cost, even though India was of far greater importance to Britain. Local forces had been raised in Iraq as directed. About 5,000 Iraq Levies could be mustered, led by British officers, but their loyalty was a serious concern. When subsequently tested, some chose to desert or murder their commanders, and in some cases, the Levies simply joined the revolt.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) disagreed with Churchill and the rest of the government over the security of Iraq, and urged MacMunn not to relinquish any part of Mesopotamia, especially Mosul. The loss of that city would only act as an encouragement to the Turks, who might look for revenge after their recent defeat in 1918, or the Bolsheviks in Russia, who were seeking ways to expand their 'world revolution'. British forces had already managed to check the Turks at the shores of the Caspian in 1918, and defeated Russian communists in Central Asia the same year, but the Turks were waging a successful war against the Greeks in Anatolia and the Bolsheviks were announcing their intention to seize Persia and advance on British India.

In 1919, there was unrest amongst the Kurds, the former allies of the Turks in the war, and columns had to be sent to suppress them. It was the combined northern threat which led MacMunn to deploy the bulk of his forces between Mosul and Baghdad, and leave detachments in northern Persia. His successor, Lieutenant General Aylmer Haldane, who took command in March 1920, thus inherited a force that was largely 'fixed' and that would find abandoning any part of the region difficult, lest it be interpreted as weakness. Haldane knew that Persia was the strategic priority, as it was the key terrain that led to the borders of India, but he was also aware that he could not afford to lose any of the major cities of Iraq, including Baghdad, Mosul and Basra. The British government nevertheless demanded that Haldane halve the number of troops in Iraq by the end of 1920, including Indian troops for which, under a wartime agreement, the British government was paying.

The Revolt Begins

In May 1920, at a series of mass meetings and demonstrations, a range of grievances were added to an anti-British agenda, including the demand to repeal taxation and land ownership



18.1 Army Camp Mesopotamia 1919 - Sydney William Carline © IWM

18.2 Flying Over the Desert at Sunset, Mesopotamia, 1919 - Sydney William Carline © IWM

legislation. The protests were orchestrated by Ahd al-Iraqi, a movement made up of former officers of the Ottoman Turkish army. Their agenda was to oust the British and French but they were prepared to countenance any local cause in order to ensure maximum mobilisation. Some Sunni and Shia leaders co-operated in an attempt to rouse the tribes to revolt, and there was some inspiration from protests in Egypt that had begun the previous year.

The first collision between Ahd al-Iraq and the British military authorities had been a short-lived incident at the oasis of Deir-ez-Zor on the Syrian border in January 1920. The kidnap of a British political officer had been resolved but there had been cross-border raiding. The fact that the British withdrawal from Syria, as French colonial forces took over, occurred without serious trouble seemed to indicate that the danger had passed. Sir Arnold Wilson, as senior British administrator, also made a virtue of meeting with prominent sheikhs in order to explain the purpose of the Mandate form of government that was being brought in. While some Iraqi leaders were assured of their status by the British, others were suspicious. Wilson believed the fractured nature of Iraqi society, with sectarian divisions between Sunnis and Shias, a collection of minorities and a sizeable but independently-minded Kurdish population, meant that British rule would probably be required for years. His main concern was that social divisions might be exploited by the Turks, the Bolsheviks or radical Islamists.

The main centres of protest were initially the religious cities Karbala, Najaf and Nasiriyah, and Wilson reported to London that the situation was likely to deteriorate into violence. However, Wilson's habit of reporting every disturbance as the harbinger of regional collapse produced criticism and indifference, even from General Haldane. Iraqis nevertheless noted that the British had not intervened against their demonstrations in Baghdad, which spread to other cities, and the British refusal to fight the Bolsheviks on the northern shore of Persia gave the impression that, with sufficient pressure, the British could be induced to evacuate the entire country.

The British military view was that revolts by tribes were unlikely to threaten control of Iraq. Previous encounters against tribal militia, as at Shaiba in 1914, had been relatively easy to suppress. Iraqi irregulars always seemed more intent on raiding baggage for material gain, or murdering stragglers, than threatening regular military forces. Consequently when Iraqi protestors made demands for representative governance, Sir Arnold Wilson rejected them in favour of retaining more compliant elites.

That faith was misplaced. The Sharifians, those who had previously been allied to Britain during the war, now threatened to invade from Syria and encouraged the tribes of the north to kill all the British personnel they could find. Despite the daily patrolling of aircraft and armoured cars to the border at Tel Afar, on the night of 3 June 1920 Iraqi gendarmes mutinied and killed their British commanding officer. Tribesmen of the Shammar clan then joined in and killed the remaining British officers, sacked the town and ambushed a British armoured car patrol that had come to the rescue. Caught in narrow streets, the crews were attacked from above and wiped out. More Iraqis joined the uprising, cutting off Mosul. There were attacks on the local Christian Iraqis too.

The British response, despite the lack of mobile forces, was swift and comprehensive. The tribesmen were defeated outside Mosul whereupon they fled across the border back into Syria. Tel Afar was retaken and demolished, and its population relocated deeper into Iraq. The general verdict was that the threat of unrest was now over.

A New Threat

On the Euphrates, however, a new threat was brewing. Ayotallah Muhammad Taqi Al-Shirazi, the temporary leader of Shi'ites in Iraq, issued two fatwa (edicts): one declared that Iraqi service in the British administration was haram (forbidden) and the second authorised resistance if Iraqi demands were not met. There was a widespread rumour that the British intended to evacuate after Ramadan, which was due to conclude on 18 June 1920.

At Hillah, it was decided to quell growing unrest by sending out the Political Officer and fifty Iraqi Levies, but the miniature force was repulsed by armed rebels who were entrenched at Mahmudiya. Regular British and Indian troops were then summoned, but it took time to assemble the company-sized groups into a respectable column. By July, most settlements along the Euphrates were in rebel hands. Marches were thus conducted and measures taken to deter further unrest. At Hillah, Iraqi dissident leaders were arrested, and the son of the Ayotallah Muhammad Taqi Al-Shirazi was seized and imprisoned. The R.A.F. flew sorties against rebellious villages, interdicting armed groups. The unrest began to dampen and the second phase of the rebellion appeared to have been suppressed successfully.

The two episodes were largely unconnected. In the north, agitators had encouraged the rising, while on the Euphrates, entirely false assurances had led local clans, who had never submitted fully to any central government in their history, to seize an opportunity for material gain and a share of power.

At Rumaitha, near Hillah, the British authorities arrested a Sheikh of the Bani Huchaim for his refusal to pay arrears of tax, but the springing from prison of this tribal elder by armed followers reignited the revolt. The police were killed and the railway line cut, which seemed to act as a magnet for clans to come in from miles around and join the fighting. The small British garrison took cover in the Citadel and held out for reinforcements to arrive.

When a small relief column, part of 17th Division, was assembled to recover Rumaitha, using the railway as its line of communication because of a lack of motor transport or horses, it was confronted by a force of between 3,000 and 5,000 rebels, and enveloped on three sides. Despite R.A.F. cover, the column was engaged closely and having suffered 200 casualties, the British and Indian formation was compelled to withdraw to Imam Hamza, fighting its way back over 12 miles.

While the R.A.F. made air drops into Rumaitha, the rebellion spread across the districts south and west of Baghdad. The railway between Basra and Baghdad was now severed, and other means of communication were cut, including telegraph, telephone, and river craft. At Samawah, a British detachment managed to get through to reinforce its small garrison, but soon after the railway link was cut and a relieving troop train was attacked: the Indian sepoys aboard were wiped out. Nevertheless, the size of the perimeter at Samawah was large enough to land aircraft, which made the isolated post an ideal spot to launch air bombing raids and thus maintain its security.

The Revolt Widens and Deepens

The question now was: how far would the revolt spread? Already, on the defensive perimeter south of Baghdad at Ibnali, Iraqi Levies in British service were becoming unreliable. In mid-July another immobilised British garrison was under siege at Kufah. Haldane had trouble concentrating a reserve, and had to despatch troops to make relief operations. The CIGS therefore made ready a division in India to be despatched, if required, to Basra. Meanwhile, in Basra itself, an Indian Army brigade was immediately sent north to clear the route to Baghdad. Yet, for

a strong operational reserve, Haldane considered withdrawing from Mosul and concentrating a much larger force at Baghdad. This was denied.

Another consideration for Haldane was that the largest tribal confederation, the Muntafik, which was centred on Nasiriyah, was in danger of joining the revolt. If it did so, not only would it furnish the rebellion with thousands more fighters, it would also jeopardise Britain's hold on the city which was a major logistics hub. It was vital, Haldane believed, to hold Nasiriyah and that meant ensuring that the Muntafik did not join the rebels.

British colonial campaigners knew well it was better to strike boldly and without delay if one was to head off worse trouble. Brigadier-General[1] Frank Coningham, who commanded 51st Brigade, was tasked to relieve Rumaitha and he applied his years of experience not only in fighting in Mesopotamia, but also on the North West Frontier of India. As he advanced, he secured the railway line as his ground line of communication with a series of blockhouses at two mile intervals held by a half company each. The construction of these sandbagged bases nevertheless consumed much needed manpower. The topography also imposed delays, as deep ravines and broken rail tracks had to be traversed. Raiding during the advance was sporadic, but on 19 July a few miles north of Rumaitha, Coningham encountered a series of entrenchments held by about 5,000 rebels. Clearly directed by former Ottoman officers, the defences incorporated dried canals as communication and fire trenches, and the whole system was concealed with vegetation. Villages were incorporated into the fortifications too, providing platforms for observation and fire control.

Coningham launched three successive assaults, but each time his brigade was forced back. At dawn on 20 July he tried again, this time with a detachment of Lewis gunners from 1/10th Gurkhas assaulting on one flank, whereupon they poured enfilade fire into the rebel defences. The less experienced Iraqi fighters started to fall back and eventually abandoned the entire position. Rumaitha was relieved the same afternoon.

Meanwhile, at home in the United Kingdom, the government was criticised for the whole policy of occupation and suppression. Led by T.E. Lawrence (of Arabia), newspapers and enemies of the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, attacked what they felt was an expensive and self-defeating approach. Wildly exaggerated estimates of the cost were made (the actual estimate for operations in Iraq was £6 million, not the £40 million claimed by the press).

18.4 Lieutenant-General Aylmer Haldane, GOC Mesopotamia © NPG

Haldane meanwhile husbanded his dwindling manpower reserves. He directed the 53rd Brigade, based at Tikrit, to relieve Kufah, south of Baghdad. The local Political Officer, although conscious that Rumaitha had been secured, was still concerned that the army should 'show the flag' and therefore prevent more unrest.

The Destruction of 'The Manchester Column'

On 23 July 1920, Lieutenant Colonel Hardcastle was therefore despatched with a British and Indian column of four companies and two squadrons, and was designated to simply demonstrate its presence in the Kufah (Kifl) area. The first day's march proceeded without difficulty, but the Political Officer insisted that a second day's march would be necessary. The intense heat and encumbrance of mule-drawn logistics had necessitated a halt and the construction of a temporary camp at the Rustumiyah Canal protected by earth berms. In the early evening, cavalry patrols detected an insurgent force, 3,000 strong, advancing on the camp, which was at that time still under construction. As the daylight faded, rebel sharpshooters were engaging the defences at a range of 150 yards.

The column commander had been ordered to avoid an engagement that would require reinforcements and to retire if significant resistance was encountered. Having consulted with his officers, and mindful of the exhausted and dehydrated state of the troops, he decided on a withdrawal under cover of darkness. Accordingly, the column began withdrawing with the baggage protected in the centre, accompanied by Indian troops, and with the companies of the Manchester Regiment holding the flanks. The cavalry acted as a rearguard. However the first few rounds startled the mules and horses. Stampeding transport animals created confusion precisely at the moment of the insurgent attack, breaking up cohesion and direction. The infantry went firm, mostly in the open, and engaged the insurgents in close quarter battle. Gunners of 39th Battery Royal Field Artillery unlimbered and came into action at point blank range.

Nevertheless, the situation was chaotic, with rebel horsemen and dismounted fighters infiltrating what was left of the collapsing perimeter. One gun was lost in a canal and it was a struggle to withdraw the rest by sections. Captain Copeland DSO MC was killed defending the transport until his ammunition ran out. Lieutenant Neufville MC* was wounded but took up a place in the gun detachment to keep the 18 pounders in action. The cavalry made repeated charges with sabres to drive off the rebels and break clean, with one squadron under Lieutenant James Knox MC, but the numbers were too great for this manoeuvre to be anything but a temporary reprieve. 2nd Lieutenant William Robinson, by contrast, kept his Vickers Gun in action and despite the intense fire directed at him, maintained a steady and controlled fire to cover his comrades.

A number of gallantry medals were awarded for the night's action most of which took place at close quarters, but in intense fire from three sides, 20 were killed and 60 wounded, and the survivors staggered back in that most trying of all military manoeuvres: a fighting withdrawal. Of all the inspirational and selfless acts in the fighting, one individual stands out: Captain George Henderson of the 2nd Manchesters personally led three counter-attacks against the insurgents with the bayonet. Although badly wounded on the third rush, his last entreaty to his NCOs was 'Don't let them win!' He subsequently died from his wounds but he was awarded the Victoria Cross for his supreme efforts. There is no doubt that his courageous action, and that of several comrades, bought time for the remainder of the column to withdraw to Hillah. In the retreat, disorientated by the darkness and the topography, some 318 troops were captured. While a proportion was later released, over 100 were executed, either summarily at the time, or some days after the engagement in the environs of Najaf. Kufah was later relieved by reinforcements from Basra.

The British Response

The news of the disaster to the 'Manchesters' Column' was the spur to further rebellion. Haldane was forced to pull his troops back from the western Euphrates to Fallujah where he could cover Baghdad. He ordered Coningham out of Rumaitha, but the extraction was made more complicated by the rebels' destruction of the railway line. In a feat of endurance and ingenuity, he loaded his stores onto a vast train drawn by six locomotives and then replaced track in front with track from behind. Protected by aircraft above and his troops on either flank, the British were watched by 6,000 rebels marching in parallel. They were waiting for their moment to strike. Small British detachments en route were relieved and picked up, and at Jarbiuyah, the only place where the movement was contested, the Gurkhas drove off the rebel blocking force and inflicted 200 casualties. Coningham reached Hillah but found himself virtually cut off at this point.

The revolt spread still further. Najaf and Karbala now rose in rebellion. Wilson therefore made use of diplomacy and local division. Instructing his political officers to strike deals with the Muntafik confederation, the local clans agreed to secure their own territories against rebellious neighbours. Part of the arrangement also involved the return of lands expropriated by the Ottomans which were now in the hands of the rebels. In one case of a wavering clan in the central Euphrates, having been offered a cash inducement by rebel leaders to join the revolt, the British offered to match the offer and, as a result, the clansmen refused to join the rebellion.

The first reinforcements from India arrived at the beginning of August but they lacked transport and were often inexperienced troops straight out of training. The 3/7th Rajputs had only their rifles, twenty rounds of ammunition per man, and little other equipment. There was no time to give them any further training or to kit them out: rumours of the imminent outbreak of revolt amongst the Muntafik Iraqis were rife and unless the reinforcements could be moved immediately there was a chance that Baghdad would be threatened. Given the scale of the threat, Haldane considered how controlling the water supply via irrigation systems might give him an advantage, but his civilian officials thought the collateral risk (and the loss of revenue) would be too great.

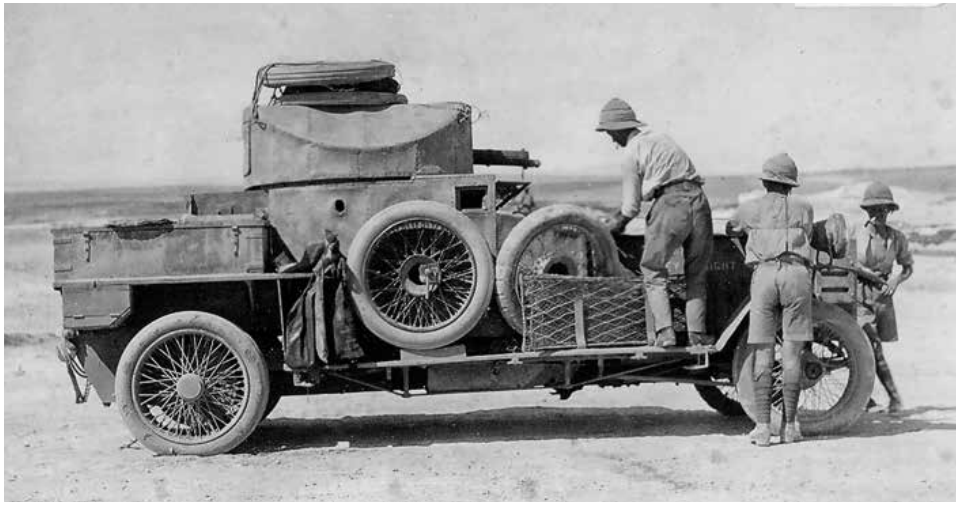
Fresh troops from India nevertheless enabled Haldane to fulfil a second plan: to divide the country into sectors, each boundary being held by a series of blockhouses supplied by the adjacent railway lines. The posts, sandbagged sangars at half mile intervals, were held by pairs or sections, and, as such, had to be withdrawn at night until barbed wire and enhanced defences could be constructed. As these new fortifications were built up, so British control was re-established in the central Euphrates area.

The upper Euphrates on the other hand was more restive. On 12 August, the murder of a popular British political officer, Colonel Leachman, was the signal for a general rising by the Zoba clans. Brigadier H. Walker led 55th Brigade into the area and soon drove off the rebels, taking possession of the crucial Hindiyah barrage, which controlled irrigation, in the process.

At the same time, there was further unrest on the Diyala River, amongst the Shi'ites. Revenue offices, seen as symbols of not only British rule but of centralising authority which the clans resented, were razed, and railways and telegraph lines broken up. Small garrisons at Kifri and Qizil Robat were besieged. Haldane sent out British cavalry to carry out punitive raids against the villages of the rebels, and infantry columns were also tasked with the duties of reprisals against the fabric of the elusive rebels' economy. At Baqubah, two reduced Indian infantry companies were routed by a handful of gunmen, and this seemed to embolden more men to join the resistance. Within days, small detachments on the Baghdad road into Persia were besieged and the town of Shahraban was looted. The tiny British garrison was overwhelmed and wiped out when the Iraq Levies deserted.

Haldane withdrew troops from the now quietened Euphrates and redeployed them to the east of Baghdad. Brigadier Coningham led the clearance operations, retaking Shahraban on 10 September. Meanwhile, British forces that had been stationed in Persia also marched onto the eastern border of Iraq, which caught the rebels in a vice. As elsewhere, fines, mainly in the form of surrendered rifles, were imposed. Recalcitrance was met with the burning of villages and the seizure of livestock. The railway line was repaired and more blockhouses constructed along its length. The nodal points of the irrigation systems were also fortified and garrisoned, which sent an important signal to the local clans about who was in control.

In London, the CIGS fought hard to get the reinforcements General Haldane needed, but the Cabinet was opposed. When he suggested that reserves could be found by withdrawing the occupation garrison from Constantinople, two cabinet members threatened to resign. There was an impasse over the future of Mosul too. The CIGS insisted it could not be abandoned lest it encourage further revolt amongst the Kurds. The solution to the manpower crisis was to draw more men from India, but there were limits to this too. The demobilisation and reorganisation after the war left too few trained men available. Only the year before, the Army in India had had to fight off an Afghan



18.3 Light Armoured Car, Iraq 1920 © RGJ Museum

incursion across the border and there were ongoing operations in Waziristan. There had been considerable unrest in the Punjab in 1919 and therefore the garrison for internal security tasks could not be reduced any further. A portion of the British army was still in Ireland because of the rebellion there, and there was unrest in Egypt to face down. Haldane reflected that he might need two divisions to reassert full control if any more provinces joined the rebellion, which would have equalled the numbers that had been required to wrest Mesopotamia from the Ottomans in 1916-18.

The other option was a greater use of technological solutions. Although there was a brief consideration of the use of poison gas, the idea was quickly dismissed, mainly for logistical reasons. Instead there was enthusiasm for 'air policing'. During the course of the revolt, the R.A.F. brought their strength up to 92 aircraft and their bombing missions dropped 100 tons of ordnance in just three months. Eleven aircraft were lost in the fighting, and at least two pilots, who were captured, were tortured and executed by the rebels. Nevertheless, the air contribution to the campaign was significant. On several occasions aircraft could attack settlements where rebels were concentrated but which were out of reach of ground forces. That said, it was the combined operations that were the most successful and efficient. When air and ground units worked in co-operation, providing surveillance and fire support, the rebels stood no chance. To augment the mobility of the ground forces, armoured cars of the Light Armoured Brigade also made a contribution. Limited by the tactics and relative inexperience of the crews, armoured vehicles nevertheless provided cut off groups, mobile machine gun platforms for the infantry and covered the flanks and rear of other forces. At Tuwairij, two armoured cars were rushed ahead of a column to prevent rebels from burning a pontoon bridge that would delay an assault on Karbala. The two cars single-handedly cut down 200 fighters and dispersed the rest.

In September, when rebels besieged a garrison at Jarbuiyah, a relief column from Hillah not only rescued the British force, it also levelled the settlement of Imam Hamza which had been the local focal point of the revolt. Several raiding parties were also killed to a man and the punishments meted out to tribal groups on the withdrawal back to Hillah prompted the elders to seek terms. The Zobas too indicated they were willing to negotiate, but would not disarm for fear that neighbouring clans would seize their property. Others remain neutral. The combination of these events meant the British army could regain control of the Huseiniyah Canal, which gave them the ability to supply or withhold water. When remaining rebels tried to regain the canal, they were driven off with heavy casualties. The tide was turning.

Brigadier Coningham was back in action that month, rescuing the besieged battalion of Indian troops at Samawah. On 12 October, tribesmen attempted to block the advance with a sophisticated system of entrenchments and the thickly vegetated close country around them. Artillery and air attacks softened up the positions, but the first wave of infantry attacks were pinned down some 400 yards from the rebel lines. Towards the end of the day, after hours of skirmishing, The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and the Gurkhas managed to get forward and as they entered the trenches, the rebels broke and ran. As they did so, Indian cavalry charged them down and the rebels' resistance collapsed.

Reinforcements were now arriving in the south and each formation was pushed up into the interior. The R.A.F. provided flank guards and early warning for two columns that advanced either side of the Euphrates, administering punitive measures as they went. Brigadier Walker was able to use combined arms to defeat a body of 3,500 tribesmen in his path. On the edge of Kufah, the R.A.F. strafed rebel trenches ahead of an advancing ground attack, with the result that 2,000 fighters were driven off and the town relieved. In the rear, cavalry machine gunned and charged the retreating rebels with devastating results. Karbala surrendered soon after. Across the country, livestock were seized to ensure compliance with British demands and fines were imposed, normally in the form of firearms. A total of 63,000 rifles were collected, illustrating the extent of the revolt.

Order Restored, the Outcome

The suppression of the revolt was successful. The R.A.F. continued to conduct extensive operations against remaining rebel bands, and the fighters were dispersed with explosives and machine gun fire. The army's armoured cars and infantry, some mounted in lorries for additional mobility, were also active in every region, assisted in many cases by the remaining Iraqi auxiliaries in British service. Despite subsequent attempts by Iraqi nationalists to portray the uprising as a 'great, national struggle', the unrest revealed the deep fissures within Iraqi society. When Kurds in the north revolted in 1919, their objectives and actions were not aligned with the Arab Sunni and Shia populations in the south. Moreover, the revolt of 1920 had been a series of uncoordinated outbreaks. The motives of some clans had been opportunism for material gain; others strove for the ideological fulfilment of a theocracy; still others were secularists hoping to impose a modern form of government consisting entirely of Sunni Arabs.

By late October 1920, the rebels were defeated. Short of funding and support, the leaders surrendered Najaf, the last symbolic centre of the uprising. Some 6,000-8,000 rebels had been killed, and 426 British personnel had also perished in the fighting. The cost of the counterinsurgency had been considerable: twice the annual budget for Iraq's administration. The imperative at the end of the fighting was therefore to find a cheaper dispensation that was more acceptable to the Iraqi people. As a result of a conference in Cairo, the British and Indian army garrison was reduced and security was placed into the hands of the R.A.F. Government was put into the hands of King Faisal ibn Hussein, the Arab leader who had been a close ally during the war. He was dependent on British advisors which ensured London's influence in the country was maintained. There were strong representations to prevent Faisal making another attempt to contest French control of Syria, where he had been defeated in May 1920, so elevating him to become the King of Iraq ensured he possessed an alternative source of power and prestige amongst Arabs.

The lack of mobility and penny-packeting of military detachments may have been useful from a political point of view, but it was against the principles of war not to have a reserve, concentration of force and hence the ability to respond in a flexible manner to a change in the tactical or operational situation. There were too few troops for the tasks they were expected to fulfil, and although the government believed there was a garrison of 80,000, it was never this large in reality. Moreover, formations which that were at full strength on paper were much smaller on the ground. Technological solutions were useful but tended to be exaggerated too. Air power was valuable but there was too little of it, and its novelty effect tended to obscure the importance of combined arms operations for actual effectiveness.

The campaign was characterised by a series of sieges and relief operations, largely because the insurgents were uncoordinated. Each phase of the revolt tended to conclude as the next one began. Only in August 1920, when there were multiple eruptions west, south and east of Baghdad, did the situation assume a more threatening aspect. The arrival of reinforcements altered the operational situation, but delays in their deployment undoubtedly led to a more significant loss of life than should have occurred. Clearly methods of reprisals used by the British, Indian and loyal Iraqi forces would today be regarded as illegal, but the exploitation of vulnerabilities in property, physical security, livestock and water supply made a significant difference to the pacification of Iraq.

At the tactical and operational level, leadership and resilience were important in this campaign. Often small detachments found themselves deprived of critical resources, outnumbered and surrounded. Burdened by high temperatures, long marches, and assailed by angry populations, much was expected of them. As the fate of the Manchesters' Column demonstrated, even when the tactical situation was dire, individuals and small teams acted with courage and resolution. Despite a hostile political climate and with a difficult task to fulfil, the actions of the British soldiers in those grim days in Iraq, even the most inexperienced of them, was a testimony to their stoicism. It is a pity then that Iraq is just another of the Forgotten Fronts on which the British army has had to fight and endure.

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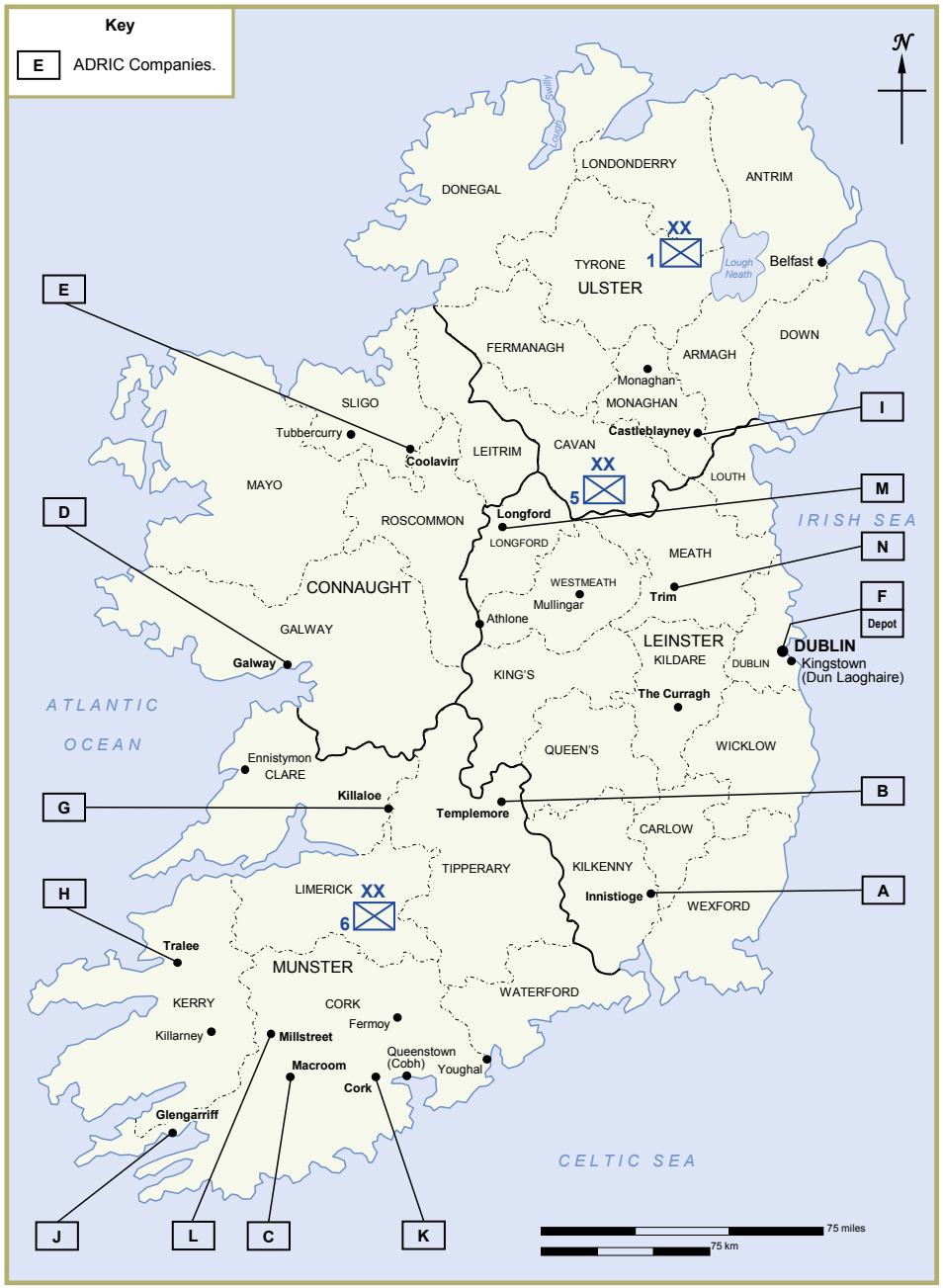
Endnotes

1. The rank of brigadier-general was abolished on 1 January 1921, causing much resentment amongst some including Adrian Carton de Wiart VC and Edward Spears. It was replaced by the term colonel commandant for officers in command or colonel on the staff for those on the staff. The rank brigadier was introduced in 1928. Editor.



Map 19.1 Ireland

19. Rebellion in Ireland 2
The British Army and the IRA - 1919-1921

Kevin Myers

British Policy in Ireland

Any chapter about the archetypal example of asymmetric warfare, that between the British and the IRA, 1919-21, must labour against the common belief that the British government was determined, by force of arms if need be, to prevent Irish independence. Nonetheless, the popular preconceptions run, that this was finally achieved, against British wishes, by a brilliant guerrilla campaign led by Michael Collins.

Almost none of this is true. At no stage after the 1918 election did the British government wish to continue governing nationalist Ireland. Britain had already granted limited self-government to Ireland in 1914, with the six north-eastern counties to be excluded, but this entire package was deferred by the outbreak of war. The 1916 rising profoundly changed relations between nationalist Ireland and London. However, Sinn Fein won just 47% of the island vote in the 1918 election. This electoral plurality - based largely in the south and the west - could not possibly be the basis for an all-Irish republic, including the predominantly unionist north-east. Nonetheless, a self-appointed Sinn Fein parliament, the Dail, was formed in Dublin with that as its basic demand. However, the seriousness of Sinn Fein's purpose was largely lost to view behind loud sloganeering and plaints of victimhood. Moreover, the murder of two police officers on the very day the Dail met, made London-Dublin talks virtually impossible.

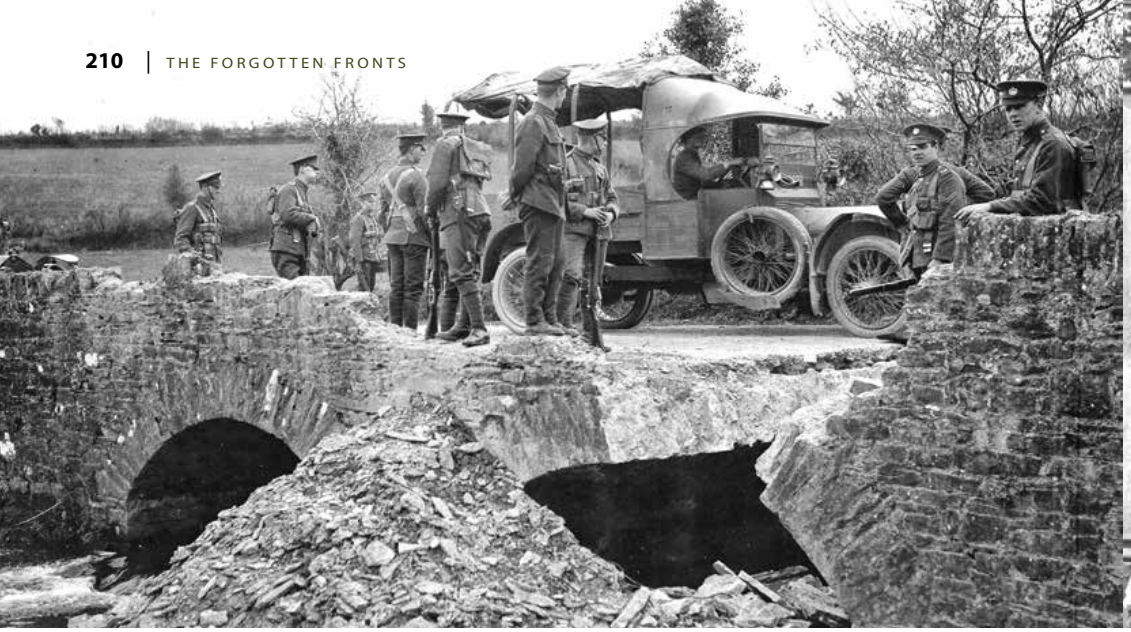
The army in Ireland in 1919 was not the resourceful, war-winning entity of 1918. That had effectively been disbanded, at the very moment that the empire was being enlarged to its historically greatest extent, and now including satellite extensions in Egypt, Palestine and Iraq. Simultaneously, new military obligations in Turkey and Russia, and with renewed problems in India, presented many different and complex challenges for the Army - and also for a government whose brain was largely engaged in the Paris peace talks.

Southern Ireland's case was painful and baffling. Almost no-one in Britain wanted to continue the union, yet no-one in Parliament was prepared to accept the declaration of the Irish republic. Britain was thus to find herself increasingly and visibly embroiled in a guerrilla war within the rule of common law, for which no-one had any operational or legal experience. Contemporaneous counter-insurgency operations in Mesopotamia, in contrast, were mercifully free of both legal restraint and media curiosity.

Asymmetry almost defined every aspect of the Anglo-Irish war, including language, for the army aside, most of the participants on both sides were Irish. Not merely were the resources and manpower of both sides unequal, so too were the emotions, media coverage, empathies and morality invoked by either participant. The smaller party to an asymmetric war, even when it is the aggressor, as the IRA was, is usually judged under less demanding criteria by the media and 'impartial' outsiders.

19.1 British Military Commitments: Correspondence between Secretary of State and CIGS

British Military Commitments **Correspondence between Secretary of State and CIGS**
Wilson to Churchill **29/7/1920**
On another paper which I am putting up for your submission to the Cabinet I show in detail the dangerous military situation into which we are drifting owing to our military commitments being altogether beyond our Military strength. I am always examining our position with a view on one hand to increase our effective strength and on the other hand to diminish our liabilities and I have already advised a complete withdrawal of troops from Danzig and Allenstein and also from Persia and a large reduction in our garrison at Constantinople.
Wilson to Churchill **30/7/1920**
As you know I am very strongly opposed to reinforcing our Persian forces except - as was the case in North Russia - such reinforcement as it absolutely necessary to effect a withdrawal. This is not the case at present. I think it is sheer madness for our people (civilians and women and children) to remain on in Teheran… [Extracts from - Keith Jeffery's volume The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson 1918-1922 - Editor].



19.2 British Troops at a Bridge Near Kinsale, Co. Cork Destroyed by the IRA © IWM

Moreover, in the case of Ireland 1919-21, the British government made no serious efforts to defeat Sinn Fein's skilful propaganda. The impact was and remains profound. One recent study of how the British press reported atrocities in Ireland for this period only covers atrocities by the forces of the crown. Not one of the vastly more numerous and very deliberate atrocities by the IRA is even mentioned.

Nature of the IRA Campaign

The IRA's campaign resulted from an existential preference for violence over realistic aspirations or prudent negotiations. The safest practical targets for what was often self-indulgent violence were the police rather than the better-trained army, which initially was a sort of armed spectator to the contest between two groups of Irishmen. This was the only basis on which the IRA could even begin a war that it could not possibly win. Sooner or later, once the Army's sword was unsheathed, there could only be one outcome: a British victory. That this is still not understood today is a testament to the power of asymmetrical perceptions and the success of Irish republican mythology.

The first killing of a British soldier occurred in County Cork in September 1919. The jury at the inquest declared that the attackers' intent had been to get the soldier's rifle, not to murder him. Irish juries seldom convicted on matters to do with sedition anyway, but here was one going one better: actually reading the minds of the absent culprits. Meanwhile, a social and terrorist war against the police was intensifying, and included a boycott of their families; even at school, their children were shunned. Courts loyal to the new 'Dail Eireann' were set up in rivalry to official courts, which, along with the staff, were similarly being boycotted. The viciously divisive nature of this war created its own downwardly-spiralling morality, which would reach its nadir long after the British Army had ceased to be a participant.

So, in 1919, fifteen RIC-men were murdered, and the Sinn Fein campaign of ostracism took its toll: five hundred policemen left the force. The old year ended with an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the Lord Lieutenant, Field Marshal Viscount French, and the New Year began with the assassination of the Assistant Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, William Redmond: his personal secretary, James McNamara, was an accomplice to the killing.

However, the IRA campaign generally had more modest goals and less daring methods. For example, two unarmed policemen-worshippers were shot leaving a church-service on St Patrick's

19.3 Mansion House in 1919: from left to right - the Republican politicians Michael Collins, Harry Boland and Eamon de Valera, the President of the Dail Eireann © IWM

19.4 Lord French, when Viceroy Of Ireland, with Sir Neville Macready in Dublin in June 1921 © IWM

Day, 17 March 1920. A third unarmed policeman attending the funeral of one of them was then shot dead as he also left the church. In Tipperary, two RIC men cycling to court to give evidence about unlighted vehicles were ambushed and killed by twenty IRA men. In county Kerry, a policeman home on leave was lured into helping a 'drunk', who steered him into the waiting hands of some IRA men, who abducted and murdered him. Undertakers refused to handle, transport or bury policemen's bodies - duties which had to be done by the victims' colleagues.

This was the campaign, in which all known conventions on warfare were effectively irrelevant, that the Army was drawn into in January 1920. At no stage was the Army's role, then or later. defined by the government. Its duties were to be essentially reactive, and in support of an increasingly beleaguered police service. General Sir Neville Macready, who cordially and openly detested Ireland and the Irish, became GOC Irish Command, and the police were under the command of another soldier, Lieutenant General Sir Henry Tudor. The intelligence vacuum that had been created by the IRA's campaign of assassinating vital police officers was now also now to be filled by the Army, with Colonel Hill-Dillon, formerly of MI5, as the new intelligence chief.

19.5 Correspondence between Secretary of State for War and CIGS

British Military Commitments

Correspondence between Secretary of State for War and CIGS

Wilson to Churchill
29/3/1920

I am sorry you thought it necessary to appoint Macready as G.O.C. in C. Ireland without letting me know. I know that the right of selection rests with you but as your chief military advisor I should have welcomed the opportunity of discussing with you an appointment which vitally affects the security of Ireland and the training of the troops quartered there, two matters for which I am greatly responsible.

Churchill to Wilson
PRIVATE
Mimizan LANDES
4/4/1920

Macready's appointment was, as you know, virtually made over my head. The Prime Minister repeatedly pressed me on the subject, and the increase of the crime wave in Ireland raised the questions entirely outside the scope of a purely departmental decision. When I sent for Macready before I left London and asked him whether he would undertake the task, I learnt from him that he had already seen the Prime Minister that day and regarded the matter a practically settled. In these circumstances I gave the necessary directions, and as Robertson had been offered this command, I also directed that a submission should be made to the King securing him his baton. What else could I do?

I should very much have like to have told you about what was taking place had I been able to see you on Monday or Tuesday, the 22nd and 23rd. I learnt on the Monday that you intended to come to see me on the Tuesday before I left for my holiday, but, unhappily, this did not materialise. I do not, therefore, think that you have the slightest ground for complaint in the matter; or if you have, it is no more than my own complaint, for the question has been dealt with as one of high policy and not as a War Office matter at all. As you know, my wishes were of an entirely different character, but having regard to the development of the Irish situation, I cannot presume to set myself in opposition to the views of those who bear the direct responsibility; and I think it is quite possible that in this matter they are right.

[Extracts from - Keith Jeffery's volume The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson 1918-1922 - The Army Records Society, Editor].

19.6 British troops on a roadside during the Fermoy search, 1921 © IWM

POLICE NOTICE
£1000 REWARD
WANTED FOR MURDER IN IRELAND.
DANIEL BREEN
(calls himself Commandant of the Third Tipperary Brigade).
Age 27, 5 feet 7 inches in height, bronzed complexion, dark hair (long in front), grey eyes, short cocked nose, stout build, weight about 12 stone, clean shaven; sulky bulldog appearance; looks rather like a blacksmith coming from work; wears cap pulled well down over face.
Information to be given at any Police Station.

19.7 Wanted, Daniel Breen © HMSO Wiki Commons

The Response

The concept of an active but discriminating counter-insurgency campaign did not yet exist. Army officers drew up a registry and card-index of known IRA men, but these would only be arrested following a terrorist outrage. The Army's role initially was still governed by the Defence of the Realm Act rather than Martial Law, and the police - the Dublin Metropolitan Police and the Royal Irish Constabulary - still had primacy. Moreover, policy - perhaps too grandiloquent a word to describe government behaviour - still vacillated. In January, the mood was stern, and the arrest of fifty-seven suspected IRA men was authorised, but, deliberately, without individual warrants (an important legal nicety). This led to a hunger-strike. With the DMP now demoralised by murder and subversion, newly recruited and barely trained soldiers had to be deployed to control the vast crowds of IRA supporters outside Dublin's Mountjoy Gaol. This was rapidly followed by a general-strike: the IRA insurgency was thus taking the social equivalent of an all-arms war. The government response was a prompt and abject. All hunger-strikers, not just detainees but also those who had, at enormous effort by policemen and soldiers, actually been convicted of terrorist crimes, were released unconditionally in a desperate bid to propitiate the utterly unpropitiable. Needless to say, police and army morale fell badly, as insurgent morale rocketed. Dockers accordingly began a ten month boycott of vessels bearing troops and munitions, and soldiers had to unload military vessels, effectively diluting the army's strength.

The central doctrinal problem for the security forces was created by the government. On the one hand, the government wanted to return to the conjoined issues of what kind of independence and over what area the Irish separatists wanted, but on the other, it refused to talk while violence continued. What was the army to do? What orders should it give its officers? What was clear that the unprincipled and undirected suasion that had been intended to bring peace had instead proved to be an incentive for more war. In the first three and half of months of the year, before the hunger strike, fourteen policemen were killed by the IRA. Over the same period following, forty-two were killed. The Army's figures were even more dramatic. The Army was not yet seen by the IRA as a prime player, and just two soldiers were killed in 1920 before the hunger strike: nine were killed in the same period afterwards. The deadly exponential mathematics of a determined and incremental insurgency, buoyed by the unreal republican expectations which querulous government decisions had helped to foment, was now underway.

Upsurge in Violence

Attacks on the police became more ambitious: one in Tipperary involved an eight-hour siege of an RIC barracks by fifty IRA men. Such guerrilla operations could only be countered by deploying large number of soldiers on time-consuming static duties and on endless patrols, against a threat that was usually hypothetical - until, that is, they had been removed. Macready felt that 25,000 bayonets were needed to support the police, 5,000 more than existed (over and above the support troops). Special three-month recruits were therefore to be deployed, reinforced by surplus personnel from the Royal Artillery.

This still didn't produce an answer. Indeed, the army was now being drawn deeper into the struggle, for ex-soldiers were now filling the ranks of the so-called New Police to fill the gaps left by murder and intimidation. Inaccurately called the Black and Tans, the New Police never operated as a unit, but were integrated into the existing RIC. However, a later body, the Auxiliary Division of the RIC, did form cohesive units. The men of the ADRIC were very tough - often commissioned from the ranks - and were formidable, often lawless, and sometimes even murderous. The two sides were shaping up for a fight.

The Army knew that intelligence was the key. The 6th Division, in Munster, the southernmost part of Ireland, was in charge of the most turbulent area. In the twelve months from April 1, 1920, it spent £2,032 of secret service funds on intelligence operations. 5th Division, in the Irish midlands, spent £320, and 1st Division in Ulster, where the IRA was barely active, spent just £14. Meanwhile, a group of volunteer intelligence officers was being trained at an MI5 special school near Hounslow, before being sent to Dublin District Command. They took up lodgings in the city, and rather absurdly attempted to assimilate themselves into Dublin society. However, they are a useful example of the sort of penumbral semi-military forces that insurgency wars invariably create. By November 1920, the Army's 'Dublin District Special Branch' was employing 97 officers, serving or reserve, on intelligence duties, and that year spent £20,000. The intelligence branch of the shattered DMP meanwhile spent just £405.

Most soldiering throughout this time was of the tedious static nature, with little or no action. This is ruinous for both morale and common-sense. That is the only explanation why officers on duty in Ireland would take fishing trips. One such led to the capture in Cork of Brigadier-General Lucas, commanding 6th Infantry Brigade, Fermoy, with two RE lieutenant colonels on 26 July 1920. Only the brigadier was kept, and two colonels released, which probably would not have happened later in the conflict. Reprisals by both soldiers and the police caused the IRA to allow Lucas to 'escape' to a police station in Limerick. The Crossley Tender taking him from the station to Fermoy was then ambushed and two private soldiers in it killed, but Lucas was uninjured. His career does not seem to have been damaged by his recklessness; he made it to major-general.

The influence of the pen on the war made itself felt in the murder of Lieutenant Colonel Gerald Smith, an Irish officer in the Royal Engineers, who arrived in Ireland to command 12th Field Company RE, 6th Infantry Division, and was transferred directly to the RIC as Divisional Commissioner for Munster. A spirited, intelligent and humane officer, with a DSO and Bar, wounded five times, and seven times mentioned in despatches, he issued stern orders to police under his command against reprisals. Nonetheless, a fabricated speech he was alleged to have made, urging his men to shoot anyone suspected of Sinn Fein sympathies, was published in a Dublin newspaper. This directly led to him being assassinated in the Country Club in Cork in July 1920. The fabrication still regularly surfaces as reality in 'respectable' Irish history books. Three months later, his brother, Major George Smith serving with the RIC Auxiliaries was shot and killed by Dan Breen and Sean Treacy during a house-raid in Dublin. Breen and Treacy were seasoned killers, and it is a measure of the ineptitude of the security forces that they were able to escape from what should have been a death-trap for these two men.

Indeed, a chronic failure of perception was still systemic on the British side. It was only in the violent aftermath of the failed settlement of the hunger-strike in May 1920 that London began to take Ireland seriously. Three of Whitehall's most brilliant civil servants were sent to Dublin to revive the fortunes of a new moribund administration, and a soldier, Colonel Ormonde de l'Epee Winter, was appointed Director of Intelligence for Ireland.

Increasing Military Pressure

One the key ingredients of guerrilla warfare is to make the enemy run hard just standing still. All thirty army battalions at this time were understrength and overstretched, with exhausted teenage soldiers perpetually short of sleep. Four extra battalions arrived, two to the hard-pressed 6th Infantry Division in the South, and two to the 5th Infantry Division in Galway. Meanwhile, more troops were required to keep order during the Orange marching season in Ulster in July. This brought the numbers of infantry battalions in Ireland up to forty two (Note that for Operation MOTORMAN in 1972, the army strength in Northern Ireland reached its peak at 28,000 - the overwhelming proportion of which was infantry - Editor). On 9 August 1920, came the Restoration of Order Act, in the passage of which all political leaders swore they would never talk to the IRA. 9 August was also the date of the introduction of internment without trial in India in 1942, and in Northern Ireland in 1971.

Army intelligence was however increasingly effective in the interrogation of IRA prisoners, many of whom were untrained and often extremely naïve. There is little evidence of torture by the army or police, though rumours to this effect would surface as 'facts' over the years. Serious allegations were made against the Essex Regiment in Cork, where the war was both ferocious and highly personal, and one IRA prisoner is said to have been made permanently insane by torture. It is impossible to say how valid this allegation is. The most famous IRA volunteer of the time, then and since, Kevin Barry, is frequently said to have been tortured. There is no real evidence for this, though he was certainly roughly handled after his arrest in September 1920 - which is barely to be wondered at, since in civilian clothes, he had been party to the killing of three young soldiers, one of them aged sixteen.

19.8 IRA suspects guarded by British soldiers at the Bandon Barracks © IWM

Barry's execution was very definitely a turning point. The night before he was hanged, the IRA in Kerry killed five policemen, wounded eleven and kidnapped two, who were never seen again; it is believed that they were burnt alive in Tralee gas-works. The town of Tralee was besieged for a week by angry police, with many houses and business owned by IRA supporters being set fire to. Asymmetric war generates its own mythology, according to which Barry was the first man to be hanged for his part in the troubles. In fact, that distinction went to an RIC man, Constable Mitchell, whose execution, like so much from this time, has been elided from public memory.

In September 1920, an NCO of the Royal Scots in the County Clare town of Ennistymon was tipped off that a police patrol was to be attacked. Troops were deployed towards likely ambush spots, but the soldiers arrived just too late. Six RIC men in a Crossley tender, five of them Irish Catholics, were caught in a hail of fire from 53 men, some using dumdums, under the command of former Irish Guardsman Ignatius O'Neill. Three of the RIC men were killed, the other three wounded and then finished off on the ground, The soldiers burnt down two local houses used in the attack. Two local Sinn Feiners were shot dead, either by soldiers or police: they were the brother and father of Ignatius O'Neill's fiancée.

District Inspector James Brady MC was also ex-Irish Guards. He was shot dead in an IRA ambush in County Sligo in October. When police and soldiers saw the damage done to his body by the IRA's dumdum bullets they went on the rampage in the small town of Tubbercurry, setting fire to houses owned by Sinn Fein supporters. In compliance with the laws on asymmetric warfare, the sacking of the Irish Catholic town of Tubbercurry became an international incident, but not the use of the dumdum bullets on the Irish Catholic police inspector that had provoked it.

The earlier arrival of the Auxiliary Division of the RIC led to a slight reduction of pressure on soldiers and added some spine to the RIC. However, the new men were undisciplined, under-trained and poorly equipped, as events were to show. In Dublin, an IRA agent in Army HQ was able to pin-point the addresses of over thirty Army officers, and it was the intention of Michael Collins to wipe out the entire British intelligence machine in a single morning's butchery. However, many of the assassination attempts on what became known as Bloody Sunday were botched. Of the twelve men killed in their bedrooms, some in front of their wives, eight were intelligence officers. That evening, a bizarre attempt by soldiers and police to arrest the IRA men responsible for the killings involved a mass arrest operation of spectators at a Gaelic football match in the Croke Park stadium in Dublin, which resulted in ten deaths. However, no soldiers opened fire; the shooting was the work of the police. A few days

19.9 Royal Irish Constabulary lying along the edge of a road beside a field during an ambush in County Clare. An armoured vehicle can be seen to the left © IWM

19.10 Major Arthur Ernest Percival, the CO of the 1st Battalion, Essex Regiment with a Senior Officer of the Royal Irish Constabulary. Percival was the GOC Malaya at the surrender of Singapore in 1942 © IWM

later came the slaughter of sixteen ADRIC men near Macroom, County Cork, several of them after they had surrendered. One Auxiliary escaped, but was soon found, and following a day's 'interrogation', was murdered.

The Tide Turns

These two events are generally taken as proof of the potency of the IRA. This is misleading. It is merely evidence of the methodological and moral dissonance that define asymmetrical war. Neither Churchill nor the Prime Minister Lloyd George evinced any sympathy for the dead men, both declaring that the Dublin officers had been extraordinarily negligent, with which it is hard to argue. Furthermore, the double-reverses merely focussed their considerable energies on nullifying the power of the IRA. Mass arrests by the army followed, five hundred in a week, taking the IRA by surprise; its leaders had not expected the transition from low-intensity tactical warfare to a strategic struggle of resources to be so swift, even though they had triggered it. Martial law was declared over much of - though not all - of Munster, with military governors now directing the police. This was fraught with absurd anomalies: in the area of the 6th Division, Waterford was not under Martial Law, but Tipperary, adjoining it was, and IRA forces in Tipperary gravitated towards the county boundary, to cross over when necessary.

This entirely foreseeable anomaly was soon removed, and martial law was proclaimed throughout the 6th Division area. However, the problem of divided authority remained over the rest of the country. In Martial Law counties, the police were under the control of the military governor; elsewhere, the police had primacy. Moreover, it took some time for the army mind to come to terms with the flexibility and informality of the IRA tactics and organisation. The IRA 'Flying Column', which was being independently created in different parts of Ireland, was not, as usually portrayed, a group of guerrillas living rough like partisans from the Peninsula or Boer Wars or the Ukraine 1942, but consisted of improvised gatherings of men, who usually lived at home, and who would be enlisted to serve locally under a mobile nucleus.

The classical example of this was Tom Barry's column in West Cork. Barry - formerly a corporal[1] in the RFA - he was a highly effective, utterly ruthless commander, who ruled by terror. His policy of executing anyone suspected of informing made him more feared and therefore more respected than were his enemy. His nucleus would arrive in an area, mobilise local IRA 'volunteers' - often a euphemism for compulsion - to block roads with felled trees and trenches, so creating either ambush-points or diversions into killing-zones. The soldiers' quandary was to work out which one was intended.

That winter, the morale of many soldiers appeared to be poor. For example, a three vehicle army patrol was ambushed in Cork by a group of IRA men, part-led by Maurice Meade, a British army deserter who had served in the German army during the war. He had later been sentenced to death, but reprieved, and then, incredibly, allowed to return home to Ireland. After just two soldiers had been killed by Meade's Hotchkiss, the rest of the patrol surrendered. The IRA disarmed them and burnt their vehicles. Meade was later responsible for the murder of three captured RIC men, and of yet another policeman after the truce in 1921.

One Army policy-response to ambushes was to tie captured senior IRA men to the front of their vehicles. Critics argued that this was illegal under the 1907 Hague Convention. The Army contended the Convention did not apply because the IRA did not behave like lawful combatants. The argument is sterile. Laws in war generally only survive when they do not intrinsically jeopardise either side's prospect of success. Another tactic, which brought the security forces into widespread disrepute and for little gain, was the term 'Official Punishments', namely army reprisals, which normally consisted of burning Sinn Fein properties. Such incendiarism probably helped the morale of sorely-tried soldiers, and gave the appearance of useful activity -

19.11 Four dead British soldiers, killed in Cork, 10 July 1921 © IWM

19.12 The body of Private Norman Thornton Fielding prior to removal by military ambulance, visible in the background, 1921 © IWM

but otherwise, that was probably the extent of the utility of such counter-terrorism.

By the start of 1921, the conflict had shifted to one of scale; eleven new battalions arrived, bringing troop strength up to fifty one (admittedly under-strength) battalions. The arrival by April of over one hundred armoured cars and about the same number of armoured lorries, proved to be a useful force-multiplier as well as a significant deterrent against ambush. As British troops levels rose, and army activities increased, the IRA was tempted into operations beyond its capabilities. Over two days in February, the army was able to close in on two IRA ambushes, killing twenty one and capturing sixteen. Four of the captives were court-martialled and shot. Six off-duty and unarmed soldiers were shot dead by the IRA in revenge attacks, as were six local men on suspicion of being 'informers'.

A month later, a force of the 1st Battalion the Essex Regiment encountered Barry's flying column, and came off worse: nine dead compared to three. And the loss of RIC Divisional Commissioner Brigadier-General Philip Holmes in another IRA ambush on two police-vehicles in the wilds of Kerry showed that the lessons about moving in strength, preferably on unpredictable routes, had still not been learnt. The IRA leader, Sean Moylan, actually arranged for the wounded Holmes to be taken to hospital, where he died.

Such mercy was increasingly rare, and the Army was now directly in the firing line, with well-laid ambushes on troop trains - but with mixed results. One ambush left five civilians and five ambushers dead or dying, for just five soldiers injured. By April 1921, the overall situation had eased sufficiently for the Army to earmark ten battalions to return to Britain to cope with industrial unrest. In fact just four battalions left for a month, with no worsening of the security situation.

It almost passes belief that a two vehicle patrol could then take the route near the one that led Brigadier-General Holmes to his death, but such was the case, and the ambush was laid by the same man - Sean Moylan. On this occasion, Brigadier-General Cummings, Commander of the Kerry Infantry Brigade, one officer and two private soldiers were killed. Such a lackadaisical approach to real danger is even more incomprehensible given the army's tendency to exaggerate both IRA numbers and losses. Army accounts often claimed attacks on the security forces involved hundreds of IRA men, when to move and arm so many volunteers over such distances would have been logistically impossible and tactically suicidal. In one unsuccessful IRA ambush in Cork, the army claimed that 'seventeen' rebels were seen to fall. In fact, neither side suffered any casualties.

Intelligence was now the core of the army's campaign. By June 1921, Ormonde's department was spending £10,000 a month, and employed one hundred and fifty staff. Army operations became more precise and more successful. In parallel, undercover army officers began a campaign of counter-assassination of known IRA men, with the explicit, indeed enthusiastic approval of Lloyd George, the prime minister. However, the military's intelligence operations never succeeded in penetrating to the very heart of the IRA's machine. This machine was occasionally still able to strike hard, as with the assassination of Captain Cecil Lees, a fingerprint expert who bizarrely, four months after the Bloody Sunday killings (called after the Croke Park Stadium killings and the assassination of British intelligence officers), was still staying in a city centre hotel.

That operation, however, was now unusual, as across the country, IRA gunmen were killing scores of Irish people - mostly psychiatric cases, tramps, Protestants, ex-soldiers and cultural non-conformists. One man was executed for living with a woman 'not his wife'. This was the kind of demented purism that

19.14 Funeral cortege at Bandon Barracks, probably of Lance Corporal Thomas Maddox of the Essex Regiment who was shot whilst carrying out investigation against the IRA © IWM

is common in revolutions. With military executions of IRA men caught under arms now occurring under martial law, reciprocal restraints vanished. (No-one seems to have realised that to suspend such executions, effectively using the condemned men as hostages against the IRA, could have been a potent moral and psychological weapon). In West Cork, a group of six unarmed off duty soldiers were shot. A car leaving a tennis party in Galway was ambushed, and all four revellers - two army officers, an RIC officer and the latter's wife - were murdered. Several army deserters - mostly teenagers - were found aimlessly wandering around the Irish countryside, and duly shot by the IRA. Some IRA ambushes at this time misfired badly: two attacks on the Green Howards led to seven IRA men being killed. An eighth was captured, tried and shot by firing squad the next day.

19.15 Two British officers, Lawson and Adams, with Brigadier General H R Cumming in Kenmare, County Kerry, Ireland, shortly before their deaths at the hand of the IRA in 1921 © IWM

The IRA began innovating with explosives, and successfully. Seven young bandsmen were killed and nineteen injured when the band of the Hampshire Regiment was blown up as they marched on a road outside Youghal. A train carrying 10th Hussars back from escorting the King in Belfast was derailed by a bomb in South Armagh. Three soldiers were killed, four injured and fifty one horses were killed or had to be destroyed.

But the tide was turning. The Army's 5th Division, based on the Midlands - roughly on the Mullingar-Monaghan axis - was able to deploy 1,500 men on a large-scale, stop-and-question drives over a very large area. In Kerry, 1,800 men performed a similar sweep. The physical results were poor from both operations, but the morale effects for soldiers seem to have been excellent. It was finally, as all such successful insurgency wars must be, a question of numbers, not least because more than 4,000 IRA men had now been interned.

At the end of May, the logistical war irrevocably turned in Britain's favour, largely because Mesopotamia had been effectively pacified and industrial disputes in England settled. Twenty fresh infantry battalions, three cavalry regiments and a large number of armoured cars were now readied for use in Ireland. In all, seventy infantry battalions were to be deployed in a series of all-arms offensive sweeps, incorporating armour, spotter planes, signals, with cavalry serving as deep-penetration blocking forces. Finally, military commanders were thinking and planning on a large scale, and not just against the IRA, but against the entire society in which it operated. Other proposed measures would include closing down banks where the IRA was active and even imposing a naval blockade on the island of Ireland. It was a miniature form of the total war that had broken Germany in 1918.

However, such draconian measures were forestalled by political initiatives. A ceasefire for noon, 11 July 1921 was agreed, yet needlessly, and ominously, the killings continued: on the evening of July 10, four unarmed soldiers in Cork who went out to buy sweets - they were too young to drink - were abducted and murdered. At 11.45am, July 11th, fifteen minutes before the truce, a soldier who was collecting stores in Killarney, County Kerry was shot dead.

Figures for Army casualties are imprecise, but about 177 were killed by enemy action before the truce, with another sixteen being killed in truce-violations afterwards. Some 76 soldiers were killed off-duty or as captives. It was that kind of war. Of the roughly 500 policemen killed, 168 were killed off-duty, fourteen of them entering or leaving church. The relative lack of military reprisals (as opposed to the many by the police, in various forms, including murder) speaks well of the discipline of extremely young soldiers. But there was throughout the campaign a serious problem with morale. Twenty six soldiers serving in Ireland took their own lives, and 61 were killed by accidental fratricide - together, the equivalent of 50% of the deaths caused by enemy action. It is not hard to see the reasons for poor morale and jumpy sentries: 6th Division listed 177 attacks on police and army in its district, and just twelve attacks by the army in reply, a ratio of 14.75: 1 - the very quintessence of asymmetry.

TO THE MEMORY OF
FIELD MARSHAL SIR HENRY WILSON BART
G.C.B D.S.O., M.P
WHOSE DEATH OCCURRED ON THURSDAY 22ND JUNE 1922
WITHIN TWO HOURS OF HIS UNVEILING
THE ADJOINING MEMORIAL

19.15 Memorial To Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson
© Wiki Commons - Lonpicman

The army throughout was woefully directed by a largely indifferent political class that did not take Ireland seriously enough, and afterwards, and quite disgracefully but not untypically, refused to strike a campaign medal for service in Ireland. Young soldiers had to endure appalling privations in wretched accommodation, often without proper sleep, accommodation or sanitation, in between patrolling night and day in endless rain, without waterproofs. Overall, the army behaved with great discipline and restraint - perhaps too much. Had the IRA faced the absolute certainty of lethal reprisals for the murders of the teenage soldiers on 10 July 1921, perhaps those very wicked killings wouldn't have occurred.

Once the political elite had grasped the magnitude of the task, and the Army's Macready and the RIC's Tudor were able to combine their collective will with the necessary resources of the world's greatest empire, the outcome was inevitable. After the Treaty negotiations were concluded, Ireland remained within the Commonwealth, the Royal Navy still commanded the Irish seas from the Irish ports of Cobh, Berehaven and Lough Swilly, while all members of the Irish parliament had to swear an oath of allegiance to the King. British strategic and imperial needs had been met by an army that then returned home, scandalously unsung, unacclaimed and unmedalled.

The outcome for Ireland was probably rather similar to what would have happened had republicans allowed the Home Rule Act of 1914 to be implemented in peace. But that of course is hypothesis. What is not is how the new Irish government dealt with a fresh republican insurgency after independence. It formally shot eighty prisoners without trial, and informally, at least as many again, in casual wayside killings. The rebel insurgency collapsed in just months. But of course, any account of such victorious Irish ruthlessness is completely excluded from that strange collective organism, asymmetric mythology.

Endnotes

1. Originally, the Royal Artillery had corporals (but not lance-corporals). Unlike a lance-corporal, a bombardier held full non-commissioned rank and not an acting appointment. The rank was equivalent to second corporal in the Royal Engineers and Army Ordnance Corps. In 1920, corporals were abolished in the Royal Artillery and bombardiers became the equivalent and acquired the normal two chevrons.

Additional Editorial Extracts

The following extracts from the correspondence between the secretary of state for war and air (Winston Churchill) and the CIGS (Henry Wilson) are shown below not just for what they reveal about the situation in Ireland but also for what they show about how power was exercised. They reveal, too, the state of the army at this time. The extracts have been taken with his kind permission from Keith Jeffery's volume *The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson* 1918-1922 published by the Army Records Society.

Extracts from - Keith Jeffery's The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson 1918-1922 - The Army Records Society.

125
Wilson to Churchill
23/6/20

These reports show an increasingly unsatisfactory position and this in spite of considerable reinforcements of troops.

I have absolutely no faith in the present regime as a semi-military semi-police operation, and I think before long we will find that soldiers do not like the work…

(Enclosed with this minute were copies of the Weekly Report on the Situation in Ireland)

126
Churchill to Wilson
24/6 1920

Have you any definite proposals to make of a practical character?...

127
Wilson to Churchill
24/6/20

You will find my answer on the attached paper 'A'…

SECRET
No. 15
Daily Report from G.H.Q Ireland, 24th June
24/6/20
2/22597 G.

OPERATION REPORT

Guard of one NCO and six men H(ighland). L(ight). I(nfantry). marching through streets were held up and disarmed at Ennis yesterday at 1830. Corporal wounded with a knife. No arrests. At Londonderry heavy sniping on troops early night 23/24th. Armoured cars returned fire and silenced snipers. Situation this morning much quieter.

S.of S.

These are very deplorable incidents and are very bad for the troops. They will continue until the Government realize that they are at war with the Sinn Fein and say so and act on the fact.

(id) H.W
24/6/20
128
Churchill to Wilson
25/6/20
PRIVATE AND SECRET

I do not think it is any use simply saying that the Government should "declare war on Sinn Fein and act accordingly", unless you show by a series of definite illustrations the kind of measures you think should be adopted. It is in this field of practical suggestions that your military knowledge would be of the utmost advantage, whereas, so long as you confine yourself to generalities, it is impossible for me to carry the matter any further.

I suggest you should draw up a paper showing exactly the kind of military regime appropriate to a state of war which you recommend should be enforced in Ireland, or in such parts of Ireland as were specifically disturbed, with definite detailed illustrations of the kind of thing which would be done under this regime which cannot be done under the present Defence of the Realm Act.

I have now become a member of a Cabinet Committee specially charged with the duty of watching over Irish affairs and suppression of crime and disorder in Ireland. Therefore I shall be in a position to bring any recommendations you may make to the notice of this Committee at the earliest moment. It is no use, for instance, answering the question, 'What would you do in Ireland', by saying 'I should shoot', or 'I should shoot without hesitation', or 'I should shoot without mercy'. The enquiry immediately arises 'Whom would you shoot?'. And shortly after that 'Where are they?' 'How are you going to recognise them?'. If by acting as if a state of war existed you mean that an incident such as that which occurred at Ennis should be followed by burning down a dozen houses or by shooting a certain number of the inhabitants, drawn by lot or otherwise, you should say so plainly so that the matter may be considered. Then if your suggestions are not adopted by superior authority, you will at any rate have left them in no doubt of what your views are. Everyone knows that the situation in Ireland is unsatisfactory, that it is bad for the troops and full of potential dangers for this country. I do not myself believe it would be bettered by the kinds of methods the Prussians adopted in Belgium, but if you think so you ought to say so…

129
Wilson to Churchill
28th June 1920

I am not quite sure that I understand your minute. Do you wish me to give my views on how to govern Ireland? This, being political, is a subject outside my province…

132
Churchill to Secretary War Office and C.I.G.S.
2/7 (1920)

Your responsibility is to make definite and practical proposals for the handling of the troops and police who are working with them and to show what directions further latitude or powers are required.

Questions of improved mobility, of concentration or dispersion, of better communications, of measures against ambushes and surprises all fall properly in your sphere. If you are satisfied with what is being done, there is no need for me to trouble you. But if you are not satisfied you should furnish a series of detailed proposals and improve matters!

You are not called upon to advise officially on the political aspect: but of course I am ready to listen to any helpful view you may wish to express…

134
Wilson to Churchill
S P A
6/7/20

I am so sorry to be at variance but as you said, and quite rightly I thought, on another paper, the conduct of affairs in Ireland is political and not military. This being so it does not appear to me that I am responsible for making definite and practical proposals for the handling of the troops and police. This is a matter entirely for the Civil Authorities in consultation with the C. in C.

As regards questions of mobility you will remember how often we have put forward the present state of immobility of the Army, and how little success we have had in remedies - and this is not only in Ireland but in every theatre in the world. And this applies equally or with greater force to our communications, out wireless, our telegraphists, our railway personnel and so forth!

If the Cabinet decide to place the conduct of affairs in Ireland in the hands of the military you will not find me slow to move in these matters, but until this is so it would surely be an impertinence and an unwarranted interference on my part to interfere with the powers and discretion of the Civil Authorities…

136
Churchill to Wilson
10/7 (1920)

You - not I - first began this series of minutes by your minute of 23/6.

After every endeavour to elicit from you your opinion, or some indication of what you wish to be done I find myself without information.

I don't understand what was the object of your minute 23/6, if you had nothing to suggest; or what comment you expected me to make.

We can all agree that the situation in Ireland is unsatisfactory. When you have some remedy to propose I shall be glad to receive it…

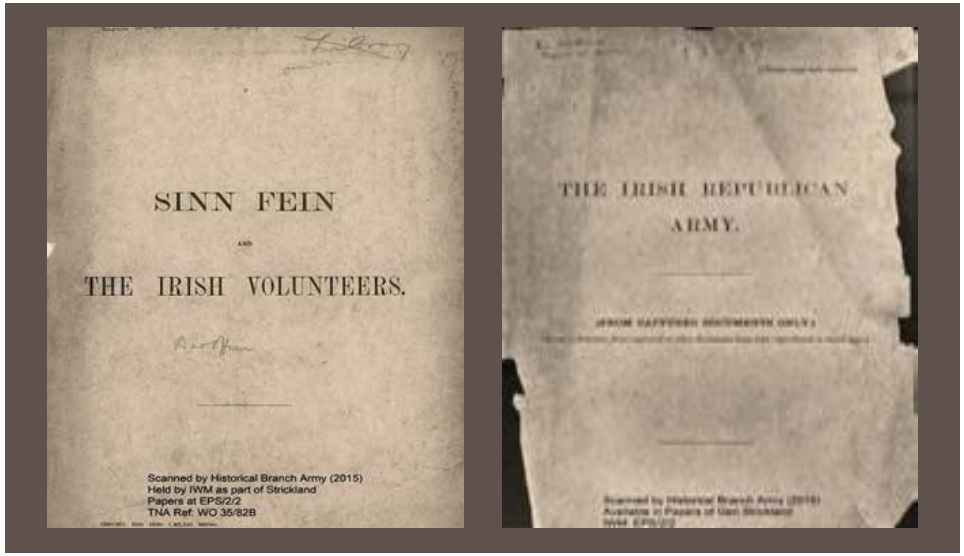
137
Churchill to Wilson
July 14th 1920
PRIVATE

I do not understand your statement that you have "no knowledge of the policy being pursues in Ireland". So far as I am aware you have seen every paper which has been circulated to the Cabinet and every decision taken by that body. You are in direct communication with the Commander-in-Chief in Ireland and sends you weekly reports which, at your request, are addressed direct to yourself. You are in frequent personal consultation with General Macready and with General Tudor. I have frequently invited you to express your views freely on the subject of the military measures required to maintain order in Ireland, but I have not been fortunate in securing from you any advice of a personal character but only general statements that the situation is 'unsatisfactory' and 'deplorable'.

I feel I am entitled to call upon you know for definite advice in regard to this question of transport. Is good use being made of what is there? Is it true, as the Quartermaster-General states, that sending more transport out of proportion to the artificers would only result in general inefficiency and in a large quantity being out of repair? Is the policy of increasing the mobility of the troops and police in Ireland by means of a mechanical transport a sound one from a military point of view? Do you recommend its continuance or expansion?

You have had daily opportunities over the last fortnight of talking to the Prime Minister at Spa, and in that respect you are more fortunate than I am or almost any other member of the Cabinet. I must say that I think it extremely unhelpful in these circumstances for you to deal with the long and carefully detailed memorandum of the Quartermaster-General in the spirit of your minute of the 12th instant…

19.1 6 Div Report Oct 1920 Sinn Fein and Irish Volunteers and 19.17 The Irish Republican Army - British Army Publication Ca 1921



138
Wilson to Churchill
18th July 1920
PRIVATE

I said I had 'no knowledge of the policy being pursued in Ireland' because I have no such knowledge.

I do not see the Cabinet papers on Ireland.

I have no idea what the Cabinet Committee recently established discuss or what decisions if any they reach.

You yourself have never once given me any idea of what the Government policy consists of.

But on the other hand I see, by the newspapers, that men arrested one day are released the next. I am told by the C. in C. Ireland that proposals made by him, after the capture of General Lucas, were turned down by the Secretary for Ireland. I see battalions sent to Belfast to quell a coming disturbance kept in Ireland when no disturbance takes place in Belfast; I am assured by the C. in C. that if we hold 8 battalions at short notice he will ask for as few as he can, he hopes he may not have to ask for any but he is fairly confident he will not ask for more that two, and these within a few weeks; not only have all the eight battalions been sent over but eight more have to be put under orders and these are rapidly disappearing across the Channel, as well as a small matter of four cavalry regiments. I know that a proposal to raise eight Garrison battalions, which were considered necessary, was abandoned: I know that an attempt to recruit 3,000 war-trained men has signally failed; and I believe that an effort largely to increase the R.I.C. is not meeting with much success. How then am I to grope for and fine a policy in all this tangle of contradictions.

It is true that "I am in close touch with the C. in C." but he has never been able to tell me the policy of the Government beyond calling on me for troops and transport without limit to either.

I never see General Tudor who is not under my orders and with whom therefore I have no concern beyond helping him in every way find officers for his needs.

No! I warmly resent the statement that I am "extremely unhelpful". On the contrary I have helped in every possible way and there has not been a demand made by the C. in C., whether for personnel or for material, that we in the War Office have not strained every nerve to meet. But on the other hand it is my duty to point out to you that these urgent and repeated demands from Ireland, demands which go on increasing, leave us with far too few troops in this country to meet a civil disturbance and with no troops at all to answer the call of other theatres.

It is the uncertainty of the present and the impossibility of forecasting the future, especially for this coming winter, which makes me profoundly uneasy…

139
Wilson to Churchill
29 July 1920

On another paper which I am putting up for your submission to the Cabinet I show in detail the dangerous military situation into which we are drifting owing to our military commitments being altogether beyond our Military strength. I am always examining our position with a view on one hand to increase our effective strength and on the other hand to diminish our liabilities and I have already advised a complete withdrawal of troops from Danzig and Allenstein and also from Persia and a large reduction in our garrison at Constantinople.

It has struck me that in view of the pressing need of a Reserve of troops in Great Britain, the Government might allow Ulster to keep order inside the boundaries (6 Counties) laid down by the Home Rule Bill now before Parliament.

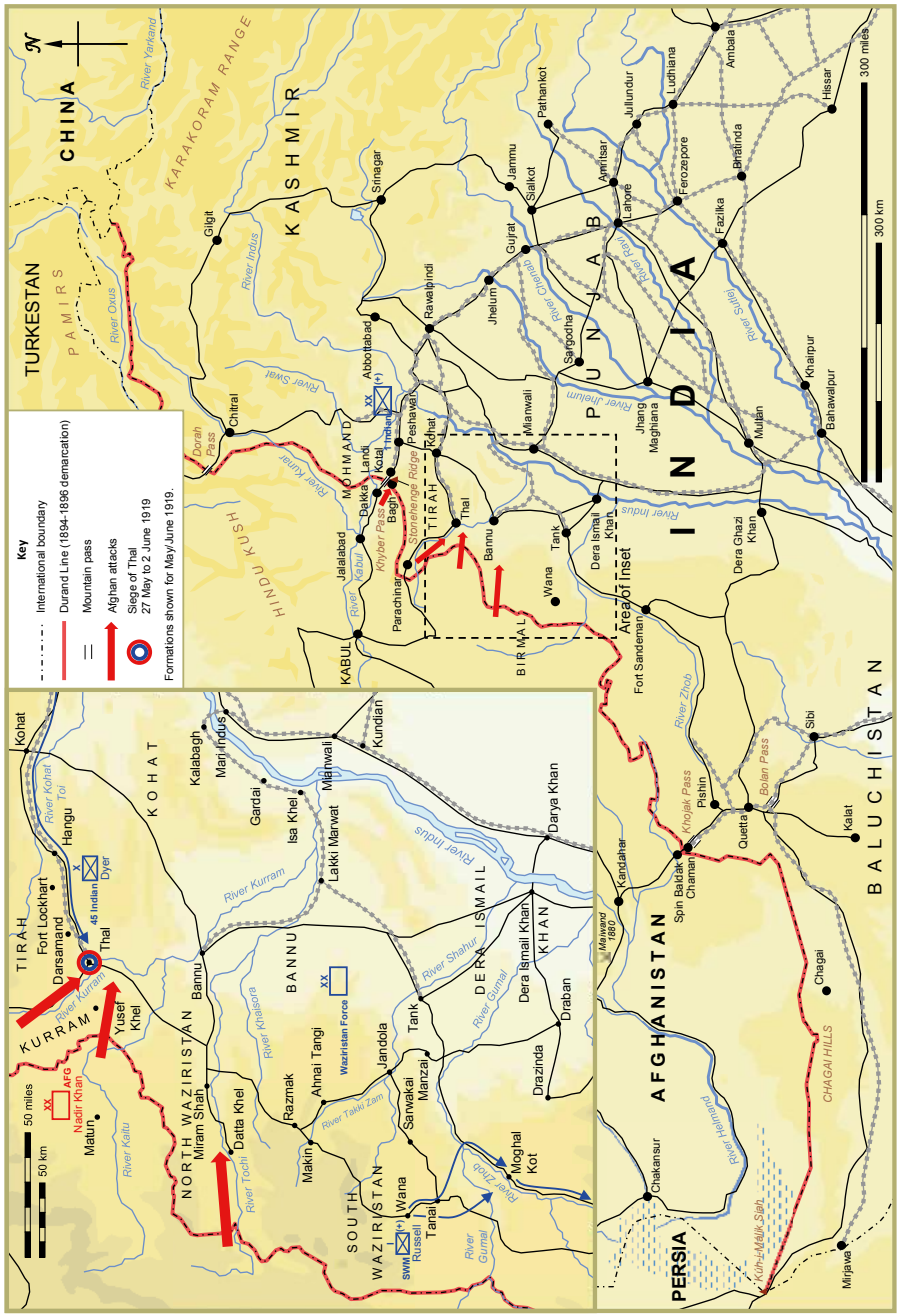
This would allow me to withdraw some 6 Battalions and bring them back to England. This, of course, is a matter of Policy on which it is not my province to advise, but in view of the dangerous position in which we stand I submit the proposal for your consideration…

140
Wilson to Churchill
30 July 1920

As you know I am very strongly opposed to reinforcing our Persian forces except - as was the case in North Russia - such reinforcement as it absolutely necessary to effect a withdrawal. This is not the case at present. I think it is sheet madness for our people (civilians and women and children) to remain on in Teheran…

19.18 An 18-pdr gun of the RFA of the type provided by Major Colin Gubbins RFA to the Irish Free State Army for the attack on the rebel held Dublin Four Courts on 28 June 1922 © IWM

19.19 Colin Gubbins by Walter Stoneman © NPG
From 1919 to 1922 Gubbins served as a battery commander, an intelligence officer and as brigade major.
In the Second War he was the head of SOE.



Map 20.1 North West Frontier 1915-22

20. The North West Frontier and the Third Afghan War

John Ross and Colonel Michael Crawshaw

	Commanders	
	British	**Afghanistan**
Commander-in-Chief India	1914 - 1961 General Sir Beauchamp Duff 1916-20 General Sir Charles Munro 1920-21 General Lord Rawlinson	Amir Amanullah
Principal Subordinate	**3rd Afghan War** Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Barrett, GOC Northern Command 1918 Lieutenant General R Wapshare Commander Baluchistan Forces **Waziristan** Major General Sir Andrew Skeen Major General Skipton Climo, GOC Waziristan Field Force - 1920	General Nadir Khan
Forces	**3rd Afghan War** 8 divisions, 5 independent brigades and 3 cavalry brigades, plus a number of modern aircraft, armoured cars and artillery **Waziristan 1919-1920** 4 Brigades 1 Air Force Wing	50,000-man standing army equipped with outdated weapons and supported by up to 80,000 tribesmen Waziristan Tochi Wazirs: 13,500 Wana Wazirs: 11,900 Mahsuds: 10,900
Casualties	366 killed, 1,683 wounded and 237 missing[1]. **Waziristan** 1329 including 1261 from disease	Approx 1000 Approx 1000
Consequences	Afghans gained control of their own affairs Continuing unrest on the frontier particularly in Waziristan	

Introduction

The North-West Frontier of the Indian sub-continent extends from the Pamir Knot in the north to the Koh-i-j-Malik Siah in the west. It nominally separates modern day Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly North-West Frontier) and Baluchistan Provinces from Afghanistan, although in practice much of the area cannot be controlled by either nation. It divides the Pashtun and other inhabitants of these provinces from their kinsmen in Afghanistan. The two main gateways on the Frontier are the Khyber and Bolan Passes; these have traditionally provided the historic invasion routes to India

20.1 Mountain guns at Chitral, July 1914 © IWM

since ancient times. With the expansion of the Russian Empire into Central Asia in the 19th century, stability of the Frontier and control of Afghanistan were key to the defence of British India. It should be stressed, in the context of recent events, that in the colonial era operations were almost exclusively conducted within the territories at least nominally controlled by the Government of India. Incursions into Afghanistan itself were the exception rather than the rule. Of the first two Afghan Wars (1839-42 and 1878-80), the first was an unmitigated disaster and the second, including as it did the defeat at Maiwand (1880), was something less than a triumph.

Much of the Frontier was won by Ranjit Singh[2] in the early 19th century, and then taken over by the British East India Company when it annexed the Punjab in 1849. When Abdul Rahman succeeded to the throne of Afghanistan in 1880 at the conclusion of the 2nd Afghan War, he agreed to surrender all claims to the Khyber, the Kurram, Sibi and Peshin. In 1883 the Government of India granted The Amir subsidies as he was now regarded as an important ally. In 1893 as a result of the Durand Convention[3], Chagai in Baluchistan, New Chaman and Waziristan less for Birmal were finally ceded to Britain.[4]

Abdul Rahman died in 1901 and was succeeded by his son Amir Habibullah Khan. The new ruler, though an able man, lacked the decisiveness of his father. At first he refused to renew the agreements entered into by the former Amir and commenced intriguing with the Afridis. It was not until 1905 that he realised that his best policy was to follow that of his father. He received the Dane Mission in Kabul and signed an agreement re-affirming the Durand Convention. He received in turn an annual subsidy of eighteen lakhs of rupees[5].

From 1905 to 1914 Habibullah maintained a friendly attitude towards the Indian Government. When the First World War broke out, India's commitment was largely dependent on the attitude adopted by Afghanistan. Had the Amir proved hostile, it would not have been possible to denude India of troops for service on other fronts. Habibullah's position was made difficult when Turkey entered the war. The Sultan of Turkey was the successor of the Prophet and the head of the Islamic world (Caliph) in the eyes of Sunni Moslems. The Sultan, encouraged by the Germans, had called on all believers to wage jihad against the Allies.[6] The British had ample proof of the strength of this movement, as the Afridis in such Indian units as were stationed within easy reach of the Tirah deserted in large numbers during the closing months of 1914. Desertions of trans-frontier Pathans also occurred in theatres of war overseas. Despite this, Habibullah continued to abide by his treaty commitments and Afghanistan remained neutral.

20.2 A BE2C aircraft that supported operations on the NWF during 1917 © IWM

20.3 Pathan tribesmen © IWM

However as a result of the Sultan's declaration of Jihad and the denuding of experienced troops from the frontier there were a number of uprisings by different tribes from 1915-1918 encouraged by Turkish agents, all of which were defeated.

These were:

- Operations in the Tochi (1914-15).
- Operations against the Mohmands, Bunerwals and Swatis (1915).
- Kalat Operations (1915-16).
- Mohmand Blockade (1916-17).
- Operations against the Mahsuds (1917).
- Operations against the Marri and Khetran tribes (1918).

20.4 2/1st Gurkha Rifles taking part in the Chitral Relief 1915 © IWM

Despite the addition of the Turkish factor, these operations were 'business as usual' for the Frontier. Most importantly, in each case the Imperial forces available, in spite of their shortcomings (discussed in detail below), were able to defeat the insurgents.

The Army of India

The Imperial forces in India prior to war in 1914 were made up of two elements:

- The British Army in India - British regular units serving tours of duty in the sub-continent.
- The Indian Army, including its expatriate British officers.

Together, these made up the Army of India. In addition, certain of the princely states maintained armies which the rulers made available for operations.

In 1902 General Kitchener became Commander in Chief in India and instituted a series of much needed reforms. He completed the unification of the presidency armies into one army and divided India into three commands, Northern Command, Eastern Command and Western Command with the preponderance of troops allocated to Northern Command because of the problems on the frontiers. On completion of the reforms the army was organised along British lines, with permanently established divisions and brigades. Infantry brigades were organized on the basis of one British and three Indian battalions, and cavalry brigades of one British and two Indian regiments.

In 1908 this new approach to organization and training for colonial warfare on the frontiers of India was thoroughly vindicated during the Zakka Khel and Mohmand punitive expeditions, when small, lightly equipped and highly trained columns of regular troops inflicted heavy casualties on the opposing tribesmen.

In 1909 the specialised manuals promulgated following the 1897-98 campaigns were abandoned by the Indian military authorities when, in accordance with a decision made at the Imperial Defence Conference, it was decided to adopt Field Service Regulations (FSR) as the basis of training for all the imperial armies. Henceforth British and Indian troops relied for guidance in frontier fighting on the general principles of war and six condensed paragraphs that only provided a bare outline of the specialised tactics required in tribal territory[7]. Despite these changes there was little effect on the efficiency of the Army in India which, by 1914, contained large numbers of officers and men who had considerable experience and a long tradition of fighting on the Northwest Frontier.

The Impact of the First World War

On 22 September 1914 the government of India agreed to send thirty two British and twenty Indian regular army battalions to Europe in exchange for forty three Territorial Force battalions.[8]Their under-officered and poorly equipped replacements had far less training and experience in mountain warfare, and this caused serious concern to the military authorities as unrest spread in the hills during 1915.

The Territorial Force had been originally raised for home defence. Only those individuals who volunteered for overseas service could be sent abroad. Officers and NCOs were poorly trained; they relied on the principles of war and Field Service Regulations. These were inappropriate for the type of war fighting required on the Frontier. As a remedy to this the army opened a Mountain Warfare School in May 1916 to train cadres of TF officers and NCOs in frontier fighting, who in turn would instruct their own units[9]. The standard of training steadily improved throughout 1916 enabling seven territorial battalions to be deployed to Mesopotamia where they soon proved their worth.[10]

Despite this development a serious lack of uniformity was evident in applying the principles and minor tactics of mountain warfare during operations conducted by 1st (Peshawar) and 2nd (Rawalpindi) divisions in November 1916. This was highlighted at a conference at Delhi between 22 and 24 February 1917 when Major-General William Bunbury called for definite rules to be laid down as he believed lack of uniformity was a source of serious danger in the field. Other senior officers, however, openly opposed publication of a special manual or any additions to FSR. Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Barrett, GOC Northern Command, closed this discussion by observing:

I think there is no doubt that mountain warfare is a science. I have always regarded it as a thing very much like a game of chess which wants a great deal of skill to avoid mistakes, but that the same time it is not a science that can be said at any one time to have reached its finality. We are always going on evolving new things and a great many of these points that have been raised have been evolved gradually from experience. We must not assume that the stage we have reached now is the last stage of the process We must remember that the increased armament of these tribes that we fight against will go on modifying our rules and systems'.

20.5 Officers in summer marching kit, 1917 © IWM

20.6 1/4th Battalion, The Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment) casualties being evacuated by motor ambulance from the Tochi Pass, 1917 © IWM

20.7 Brigadier General Crocker and staff in South Waziristan 1917 © IWM

20.8 Khetran chiefs at peace talks, Bakham, 27 March 1918 © IWM

20.9 British sentry keeping watch over the Khyber Pass - Third Afghan War, 1919 © IWM

In 1916 General Sir Charles Monro was appointed C in C India, he had masterminded the successful withdrawal from Gallipoli and then succeeded Haig as GOC 1st Army in France. He faced ever increasing demands for troops. In October 1916 He brought the entire recruiting effort under the control of the Adjutant General of India who instituted changes without delay. Henceforth all recruiting was put on a territorial basis with local recruiting for both combatant and non-combatant personnel. These reforms had a dramatic effect on recruitment with the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force strength rising to 120,000 by the end of 1916 and similarly the army of India to 79,000 British and 177,500 all ranks.[11]

The Third Afghan War May - August 1919

Causes

Amir Habibullah had gradually freed Afghan foreign policy from British domination, and the Government of India, preoccupied in more vital matters, tacitly accepted the new situation. When the First World War started Afghanistan remained neutral in the conflict, Habibullah accepted a Turkish-German mission in Kabul and military assistance from the Central Powers as he played both sides of the conflict for the best deal. By prevaricating, he resisted numerous requests for direct assistance against the British. However he was unable to prevent anti-British tribal leaders and Turkish agents from fomenting trouble along the frontier. The departure of the majority of the Army of India to fight overseas, and news of British defeats at the hands of the Turks in Gallipoli and Mesopotamia, aided these Turkish agents in their efforts at sedition and in 1915 there was unrest amongst various border tribes. Despite these attempts, the frontier remained settled at a time when Britain could ill afford trouble.

At the end of the World War Habibullah attempted to negotiate away British control of his foreign policy, but before negotiations were concluded he was assassinated. After a short power struggle he was succeeded by one of his sons, Amanullah, who appointed a number of officials who were both nationalist and anti-British. On 13 April 1919 the new Amir declared Afghanistan independent in both internal and external affairs. The British decided to ignore this, largely because of internal unrest in India itself. Riots had occurred in several cities and on 11 April 1919 an estimated 379 Indians were killed when troops under Brigadier-General Dyer opened fire on a prohibited assembly in Amritsar. This act, although it deterred future rioters, sent a profound shock throughout India[12].

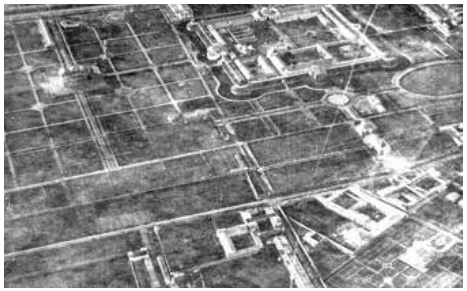
Amanullah, under the pretext of preventing unrest spreading into Afghanistan ordered his army to move to the frontier[13]. On 3 May Afghan troops entered the Khyber and the war began. The Amir had resorted to war in an attempt to regain Afghanistan's lost provinces in order to consolidate his rule at home[14].

Campaign Summary

Phase 1. 6 -25 May There were actions on the Khyber front and attempted Afghan attacks through Mohmand. The movement of British reserves to the northern area and the formation of a further reserve of Brigade strength at Ambala, Jubulpore, Dhond and Lucknow. During this period there was little trouble from the border tribes.

Phase 2. 26 May - 2nd June General Nadir Khan invaded the central area and besieged Thal. Militia posts in Waziristan were abandoned after mutinies in the North and South Waziristan Militias. British reserves were deployed to Kohat and Bandu. The Afghans were attacked at Baldak.

Phase 3. 3 June - 8th August Fighting ceased between British and Afghan regular troops after the RAF bombed the Amir's palace in Kabul, however the border tribes continued with the insurgency.



20.10 Aerial view of part of Kabul taken from Handley Page Bomber during its bombing raid on the Afghan capital, 24 May 1919 © IWM

20.11 Portraits of Mahsud tribesmen © IWM

20.12 Field gun of 'M' Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, in action against snipers at Dakka, 15-17 May 1919 © IWM

Critical Events

The use of the RAF to bomb Kabul convinced the Amir to sue for peace.

Lessons

Afghan regular troops were easily beaten, however the ability to call on large numbers of insurgents from amongst the border tribes was a distinct advantage.

- The vulnerability of the lines of communication to attacks by hostile tribesmen
- The need for very robust sanitary conditions and clean water to prevent outbreaks of disease. There was a severe outbreak of cholera which mainly affected native troops thus slowing operations.
- The effectiveness of Air Power, both tactical and strategic. This was the first time the RAF were used in a COIN campaign. It helped to negate the Afghans domination of high ground.
- The Afghan tribesmen were underestimated. They were quick to adapt to new technologies and to learn new tactics. They thoroughly understood the principles of fire and movement[15]
- A large amount of transport was required to provide the extra ammunition and supplies for a modern army.
- The need to defend the lines of communication reduced the mobility of the British forces.

Waziristan 1919 - 1921

The prelude to the 1919-21 campaign in Waziristan was an incursion by the Mahsud Tribe in the summer of 1917 while most British forces were otherwise engaged fighting in the First World War. The British forces eventually restored calm while the Wazirs took advantage of unrest in Afghanistan following the Third Anglo-Afghan War to launch raids against British garrisons. One of the reasons for these raids was that a rumour had been spread amongst the Wazirs and the Mahsuds that Britain was going to give control of Waziristan to Afghanistan as part of the Treaty of Rawalpindi, the peace settlement that ended the Third Afghan War. The tribes, sensing British weakness launched a series of large scale raids in the administered areas. By November 1919, they had killed over 200 people and wounded a further 200[16].

"It is, perhaps to be expected that those who do not know India and the frontier, and even some who have fought on the frontier in pre-war days, but lack the knowledge and imagination to realise that conditions have altered with the great improvement of the armament of the tribesmen, cannot understand or believe the standard of training that is required for the infantry in the conditions that now prevail on the frontier today. To such, the belief is natural that mere frontier tribes cannot be formidable opponents to modern troops nor can they believe that the standard of training or methods of tactics that succeeded in the Great War can, in the former case, be insufficient, or, in the latter, be inapplicable to a Frontier campaign". [17]

Major General Skipton Climo,
GOC Waziristan Field Force - 1920

The first attempt to subdue the Wazirs began in November 1919, when Major General Sir Andrew Skeen launched a series of operations against the Tochi Wazirs. These operations were largely successful. However, as Skeen turned attention to Mahsuds in December 1919, the army met heavy resistance because the largely inexperienced Indian units came up against determined tribesmen. The best units of the Indian Army were still overseas following the end of the First World War. Many of the battalions employed in this campaign were second-line units and British Territorial Force Battalions

The fighting continued for about twelve months, and the British had to resort to using aircraft on a number of occasions to suppress the tribesmen. There were a number of successes, notably the 2/5th Gurkhas stand during the eight-day battle in January 1920 at Ahnai Tangi, and the efforts of the 2/76th Punjabis who fought their way through to support them. The Mahsuds took heavy casualties during the fighting at Ahnai Tangi and it was these casualties, as well as the destruction of their villages a month later by bombers of the RAF, that temporarily subdued the Mahsuds. When the Wana Wazirs rose up in November 1920, they appealed for help from the Mahsuds. As these were still recovering from their earlier defeat, no support was forthcoming and the Wazir opposition faded away. On 22 December 1920 Wana was re-occupied[18].

Lessons of the 1919 - 1920 Waziristan Campaign[19]

'The operations have merely borne out the principles of mountain warfare, which are well known from former campaigns. It is however necessary here to lay emphasis on the supreme importance of adequate training for troops prior to their deployment in a mountain campaign. Nothing can take the place of careful individual training. If possible, it is more essential in mountain warfare than in any other class of fighting that troops should have confidence in their weapons. This can only be obtained by systematic individual training, which must include instruction on making the best possible tactical use of ground, in the principles of fire and movement, and the mental development of the soldier to such a degree of alertness, that no target escapes detection and appropriate action is immediately taken. At the beginning of these operations a proportion of the troops were not fully masters of their weapons. This was due to ignorance of how to use them to the best advantage as owing to the demands made by the Great War, men had been somewhat hastily trained, and it is probable the severity of the fighting in December was due to a certain degree to this lack of training.'

Dispatch by General Sir Charles Munro
Commander in Chief India on Operations in Waziristan
1919 - 1920 (Simla: AHQ India 1921)

The insurgents had gained possession of large numbers of captured Lee Enfield rifles, which caused a change of tactics. Advances into Waziristan had to be conducted at a much slower pace, with picquets having to dominate the surrounding heights out to a distance 1500 yards. Increased use also was made of night operations which negated the effectiveness of tribal snipers. Notably the tribesmen had also developed primitive improvised explosive devices[20].

"Our 'dud' shells and aeroplane bombs have provided the tribesmen with a supply of high explosives which he has been latterly turning to good account in the making of tin can bombs, which are generally buried and lightly covered with sand on a 'kachcha'[21] road or track. When found, they must be treated with the greatest respect. The best way is to explode them with rifle fire from a safe distance. If this cannot be done, they should be destroyed, preferably by the sappers, on the lines laid down for 'dud' grenades."

Major-General Sir Andrew Skeen

- The use of ambushes as part of the increase in night operations was found to considerably unsettle the tribesmen causing a loss of morale and disruption to their plans.
- The heavy fighting in Waziristan taught British officers that existing methods had to be adapted and new tactics developed to ensure victory.
- Initially, heavy casualties were due to the poor standard of the troops employed. It emphasised the need for a high standard of infantry training, particularly physical fitness and marksmanship. It was found that where the infantry were firing in an undisciplined manner, the tribesmen would recognise the poor standards and subsequently single out the unit as a weak point to attack.
- The employment of aircraft proved to be immeasurably valuable particularly with the provision of air photos. The requirement for air to ground communications was highlighted, together with the need for RAF officers to have a basic knowledge of Army organisations and tactics.
- There was also a need for rear area commanders to have sufficient troops available to deal with tribal incursions to the rear of the main columns in order to allow forward commanders to concentrate on their missions.
- The importance of pure water supplies and sanitation was highlighted as the Army suffered far less from disease than in previous expeditions.

Conclusion

During the First World War there was an insatiable demand for troops to reinforce other theatres of the war. This led to the denuding of the North West Frontier of very experienced British and Indian troops who were replaced by largely second line units and inexperienced units of the British Territorial Force. However there was no let up to tribal unrest in the frontier areas. Whilst Habibullah was still Amir of Afghanistan, he was able to resist pressure from the Turks and Germans to cause trouble on the frontier. However this did not stop Turkish agents from fomenting unrest amongst the Tribes and locally recruited militias with the Sultan's call for Jihad behind them.

20.13 View of Malakand Camp © IWM

After his assassination he was succeeded by one of his sons, Aminullah, who declared Afghanistan independent in both internal and external affairs. The British already concerned with widespread unrest in India ignored this move. However on the pretext of avoiding unrest and to consolidate his position in Afghanistan Aminullah invaded the border area. The short-lived war ended with the Treaty of Rawalpindi, which took away British subsidies to Afghanistan but granted freedom over its external affairs.

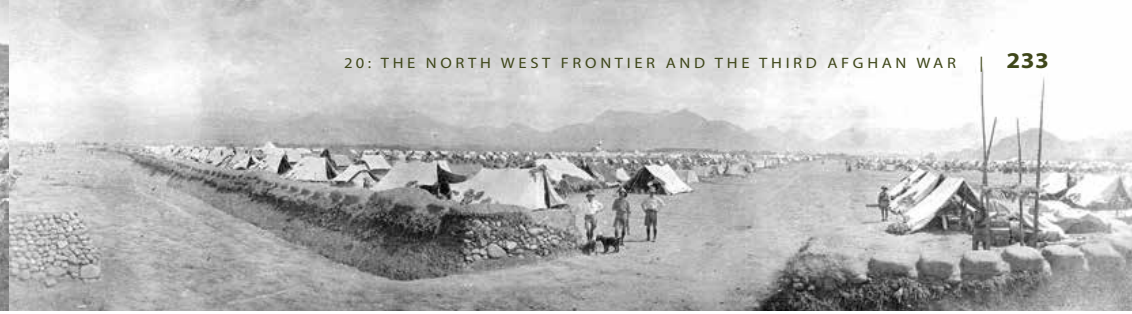
One of Aminullah's first moves after the Treaty was to recognise Bolshevik Russia the first country to do so. It also led to the British to revert to their pre-war policy of defending the frontier against a possible invasion by Russia[22].

The British were hampered by mutinies in the Waziristan Militias and the inexperience of their own troops as many seasoned regulars of the Indian Army were still overseas. However both the Third Afghan War and the Waziristan campaign introduced the use of air power on the frontier. This was the first time it had been used in a counter-insurgency situation and it proved its effectiveness.

The British were fortunate that major hostilities did not break out in the frontier region until after the Armistice. For this they owed a major debt to Amir Habibullah and his skilful footwork throughout the War. It is probable that had the Amir lived, the Third Afghan War would not have occurred.

A widely applicable and timeless lesson from these operations stems from the fact that although the shortcomings of the replacement forces were plain to see, and senior commanders were entirely correct in emphasising them, unrest on the Frontier was successfully contained for the duration of the War. The force mix, of Territorials, second line Indian Army troops, and the few British regular battalions remaining in theatre, was good enough for the task it faced. 'Good enough' means exactly what it says; outcomes are more important than the brilliance of the methods used to achieve them.

20.14 Waziri Khassadars, 1917 © IWM



20.15 View of Malakand Camp © IWM

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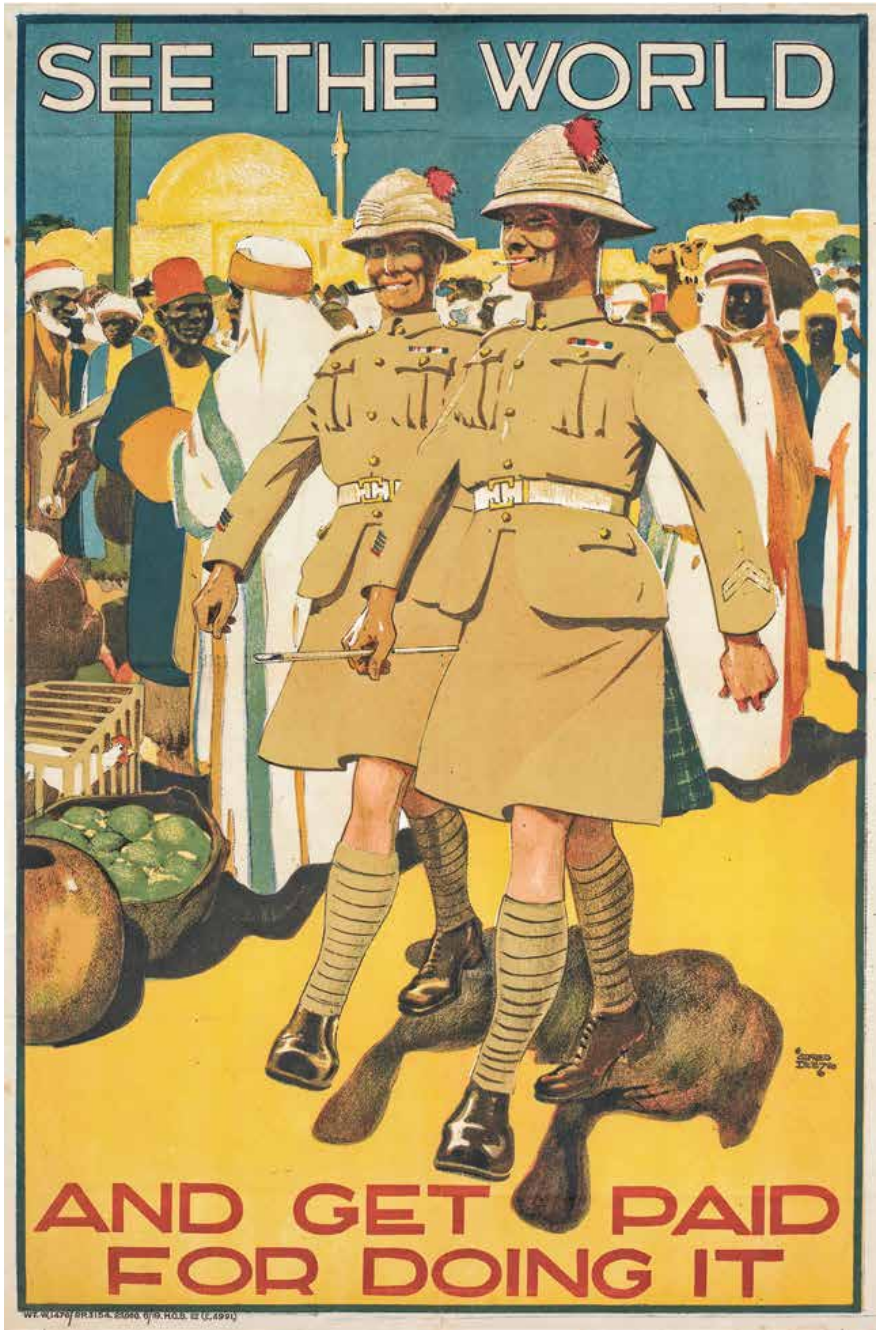
1. Robson, B, *Crisis on the Frontier: The Third Afghan War and the Campaign in Waziristan 1919-1920* (Staplehurst: Spellmount), p.235.
2. Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839) was a Sikh emperor of the sovereign country of Punjab and the Sikh Empire. For almost 40 years, Ranjit ruled over one of the largest territories in India not at that time under British control. He extended his territory from the cities of Lahore and Amritsar to include all of the Punjab between the Sutlej and Indus rivers. He avoided conflict with the British over a disputed border by entering a peace treaty with them, which he subsequently honoured. He promoted trade and commerce, and, running an efficient and safe state, gained the respect of his powerful neighbours. Following his death the Punjab was annexed by the British.
3. The Convention negotiated the border between Afghanistan and the Government of India represented by Sir Mortimer Durand. The result was the establishment of the Durand Line This is internationally recognised as the border between Afghanistan and modern day Pakistan, which stretches 1,610 miles. The line, as with many boundaries from the colonial era, ignores ethnic boundaries, dividing Pashtuns, Baluchis and others on one side of the frontier from the identical groups on the other.
4. General Staff Branch AHQ India, The Third Afghan War 1919: Official Account (Government of India, Calcutta 1928) p11
5. A lakh is 100,000 rupees
6. Heathcote TA, *The Afghan Wars 1839 -1919*, (Spellmount, Stroud 2007) p157
7. Field Service Regulations, Part I Operations. 1909 (Reprinted with Amendments, 1912), (London, 1912)
8. The Long Long Trail 1914-1918 accessed 8 January 2016. Source indicates that although TF divisions were ordered to India, supporting arm and service elements were in many cases diverted to formations destined for France and elsewhere.
9. Report on the Principal Measures taken in India during the War to Maintain Training at the Standard required in Modern War, (Calcutta, 1919), p.2 and App. A
10. Fourth Supplement to the London Gazette dated 25th July 1919 (London Gazette London 1919, P9542 paragraph 27)
11. C in C India's despatch Fourth Supplement to the London Gazette dated 25th July 1919 (London Gazette London 1919, P9542 paragraph 28)
12. Heathcote TA, The Afghan Wars 1839 -1919, (Spellmount, Stroud 2007) p161
13. Ibid p161
14. General Staff Branch AHQ India, The Third Afghan War 1919: Official Account (Government of India, Calcutta 1928) p182
15. General Staff Branch AHQ India, The Third Afghan War 1919: Official Account (Government of India, Calcutta 1928) p135
16. Wilkinson-Latham, Robert, (1977), North West Frontier 1837-1947, (London: Osprey) p.25.
17. TNA: WO106/56 Waziristan Force Weekly Appreciation for week ending 13 Jan 1920.
18. Barthorp, Michael. (2002). Afghan Wars and the North-West Frontier 1839-1947. (London: Cassell) p158
19. L/Mil/17/13/12, Frontier Warfare Part IV Operations in Waziristan, 1919 - 1920, (London: India Office Library and Records).
20. Skeen, General Sir Andrew, (1932) Lessons in Imperial Rule: Instructions for the British Infantryman on the Indian Frontier, (Barnsley: Pen and Sword republished 2008), p.11.
21. 'kachcha' - unmade, as for road. General meaning rough, poor quality. Often spelt 'kutcha' in soldier-Hindi.
22. Keith Jeffery 'An English Barrack in the Oriental Seas'? India in the Aftermath of the First World War Modern Asian Studies Vol. 15, No. 3, (1981) , p 370.



21.1 Recruiting Poster - Alfred Leete © IWM

21. Demobilization and Interim Army

Charles Messenger

The Nature of the Army

When the fighting came to an end in November 1918 the British Army had a strength of nearly 3.6 million men, some 15 times its size at the outbreak of war four and a quarter years earlier. This excludes Dominion and Colonial forces, and the Great War's equivalent of the Home Guard, the Volunteer Force. The Army was widely scattered. There were over 1.5 million men in France -some 40 per cent of the total - with smaller contingents in Italy, Egypt & Palestine, Salonika, East Africa, Mesopotamia, Aden, and an as yet small but growing commitment in Russia. There were, too, garrisons throughout the Empire, notably the three Territorial divisions (43rd - 45th) which had been sent to India and elsewhere in 1914 to replace Regular troops, albeit many of their battalions had since departed for more active theatres, notably Mesopotamia and Palestine. The Army was thus spread very wide.

As for the soldiers that made up the Army, the vast majority were volunteers, Territorials and Kitchener men, who had signed up for three years or the duration of the war, or conscripts, whose term of service was also governed by the end of the war. It was natural therefore that they expected to be returned to civilian life very shortly after the fighting had ceased. The Army was thus faced with a problem, but plans for demobilization were already in place.

Early Planning

As early as December 1914 thought had been given on how best to reduce what was then a rapidly expanding army to its prewar strength. The permanent under-secretaries at the War Office and Board of Trade considered demobilization at the end of hostilities in the context of the labour market and recognised that it might take many discharged soldiers time to find a job. Hence they recommended that they should receive four weeks' paid terminal leave plus a gratuity, as well as a year's free unemployment insurance. Then, in May 1916, the government established a sub-committee to examine demobilization and the Army under the auspices of the Cabinet Reconstruction Committee. Its members included Maurice Hankey, secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence, the Labour politician Arthur Henderson and William Beveridge, later to become famous for the report named after him which established today's welfare state, but then a civil servant at the Board of Trade.

They began with the assumption that the end of the war would see the Army at a strength of 3.5 million, of whom 1.4 million were at home - remarkably close to the actual figures in November 1918. They selected two scenarios, one with a postwar army of 750,000 men and the other 200,000. They agreed that demobilised men should receive the same benefits that had been recommended at the end of 1914. The feeling was that priority should be given to those who had jobs waiting for them in civilian life, followed by those with trades in industries which were short of labour.

21.2 William Beveridge, 1910 © U LoC

There matters rested until May 1917, when the Directorate of Mobilization at the War Office was renamed the Directorate of Demobilization. This was followed that July by the establishment of the Ministry of Reconstruction responsible for restoring the country to a peacetime footing. The Subcommittee on Army Demobilization was placed under it and issued a second interim report in October 1917. Matters were now beginning to clarify. The War Office now estimated that 20,000 men could be released in the United Kingdom per day and the same number from France - other theatres of war were not mentioned. It was believed, though, that it was essential that the Army should not retain manpower for longer than was absolutely essential. As the committee prophetically commented:

21.3 105 Siege Battery RGA. Last muster before demob Torreglia, Italy, February 1919. The Battery Commander (centre) is Major E.H. Shepard MC RGA - the famous illustrator of Winnie the Pooh © The Shepard Trust

' ... in view of the terms of enlistment of the majority of men, it would probably be difficult to retain them for any longer period, and public opinion would certainly demand their release at as early a date as the working of the military machine will allow.'

Priority was now to be with those needed in jobs essential to get the country running properly again and open up employment for others. They became known as 'pivotal men'. Thereafter it would be those with jobs to go to, and after that priority would be given to married men. The committee asked the Government, however, to define what it meant by the 'period of the war', the term under which most soldiers were serving. At the time, though, with little idea of how the war might end, no clear answer could be given.

The underlying mechanism was that demobilization would be piecemeal with the object of reducing most units abroad to cadre strength before they returned home. Douglas Haig was made aware of the plan before the interim report was issued and made his feelings plain in a letter to the War Office dated 3rd October 1917. He was concerned that the scheme as it stood took no account of the likely conditions in France and Flanders once the fighting had ended. Discipline was likely to be a very real problem and *'a feeling of jealousy will arise, men will keenly watch the dates of departure of others and will institute comparisons as to their respective claims, there will be generally an unsettled state, and as the consequences of a prolonged and arduous war, nerves will be irritable and in an unstable condition.'* There was, too, the problem that the French and Belgian armies would be demobilizing at the same time. This was likely to mean a shortage of billets and limitations on the British use of indigenous railways. The scheme was also reliant on the accuracy of returns on soldiers' trades and where they wanted to be demobilized. Furthermore, it would be impossible to release some pivotal men since their services would still be needed for some time, especially if they were working in transportation, the handling of stores, and in hospitals caring for the wounded and sick. Instead, Haig proposed that demobilization take place by divisions, with those that had been in theatre the longest taking priority. His letter was apparently shown to the Cabinet, but the Government remained adamant that the national economy must take priority and dismissed his proposal.

Planning Refined

During 1918 the demobilization plan was fleshed out in detail. It was recognised that one particular group needeed to take priority over the pivotal men. This covered those needed as civil servants to administer the whole process. These were mainly men serving as military clerks and hence experienced in processing documents. They became known as demobilizers. Next in priority behind the pivotal men were the 'slip men', those whose employers were holding jobs open for them. They were given this name because they had to fill in a civil employment form with a tear off slip which had to be completed by the employer. Thereafter the troops were divided into groups according to trades, with priority given to those industries which would best help to get the country back on its feet. This also governed the order of releasing the slip men. Thus, Group 1 was agriculture, Group 2 seamen and fishermen, Group 3 miners, Group 22 shipbuilding, Group 33 building trades (including navvies), and Group 43 students and teachers. The last-named recognised the fact that many of those who had gone to war had done so

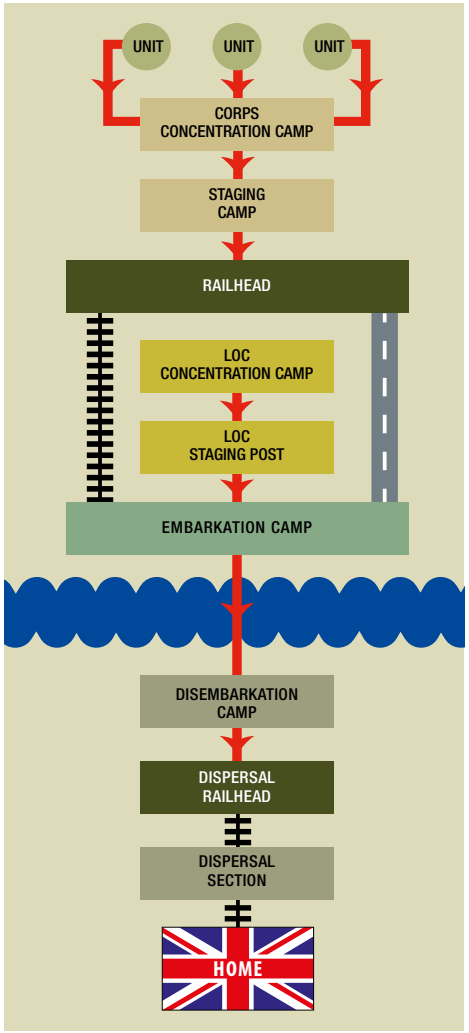
straight from school and required training or further education before they could be regarded as employable. It was a problem that had been recognised in 1917 and efforts had been made to provide Medical Category A4 soldiers, ie those who were fully fit but too young to be sent to a theatre of war, with some education during their training. Likewise the YMCA had been active both at home and in the base areas in France in providing lecturers and courses, especially in modern languages. Unfit officers were also given the opportunity to take university courses. Apart from general educational training, greater emphasis on education was now to be given during the demobilization phase, especially in terms of vocational training, although it was officers, rather than men, who were to be the main beneficiaries and the question of industrial apprenticeships was seemingly ignored.

As for the mechanics of demobilization, the War Office would issue each expeditionary force overseas and the home commands with a daily allotment of men to be demobilized. The eventual daily totals agreed were 20,000 men from the army at home and 17,000 for France. Some more far flung theatres of war - Salonika, Italy and Egypt - were each given a small allotment which would travel home via France, but otherwise the numbers to be demobilized were dependant on shipping availability. As for those troops garrisoning the Empire, they would largely have to wait until they could be relieved by Regular troops. The actual selection of men for demobilization was done by their units, but commanding officers were given guidance in the context of the priorities at the time.

Demobilization Chain

Those serving abroad would initially move to a Corps Concentration Camp and then pass through Army and Lines of Communication staging camps to an embarkation camp. Once they had completed the sea voyage back to Britain they would pass through a disembarkation camp to a dispersal camp, where demobilization would actually take place. The principle was that a man should be demobilized as close to his home as possible and to this end the country, including Ireland, was divided into twenty Dispersal Areas, their size being dependant on population size. Within each area was placed a Dispersal Camp. Thus, Greater London was Dispersal Area XA, with its dispersal camp at Crystal Palace, while Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire represented Area IXA and had Thetford earmarked as the Dispersal Camp.

The soldier arrived at the Dispersal Camp armed with a number of documents. Army Form Z22 enabled him to claim for any disability incurred during his service, although he underwent a medical before leaving his unit. He had a Certificate of Employment detailing his military career, an Army Form Z44 which enabled him to apply for a gratis set of civilian clothes. If he did not take up this offer he was given 52 shilings in lieu. He had also been issued with a Dispersal Certificate, which gave his personal details and the army kit he had possessed on leaving his unit. The cost of any items found deficient at the Dispersal Camp would be deducted from his pay. He handed in all his kit, apart from his uniform (excluding greatcoat), and was issued with a railway warrant to his home town, and a Protection Certificate. This ensured that he could not be arrested as a suspected absentee or deserter while on his 28 days' terminal leave and



21.4 The Demobolization Chain

enabled him to receive army medical attention. It was also used as proof of identity when he went to the post office to collect his weekly pay, which was issued to him via money or postal order, while on leave. He was also given a Demobilization Ration Card, which could be exchanged for an Emergency Ration Card at the nearest Food Office. In addition, he received his Out-of-Work Donation Policy, which covered him against unavoidable unemployment during his first year back in civilian life and an Army Form Z50. During his final leave the soldier was required to return his greatcoat to his nearest railway station. He presented his Z50 with it and received £1, which was deducted from his war gratuity. Many, however, retained their greatcoats, it often being

much cheaper to get them converted to civilian overcoats than to purchase these new.

Shortly before the end of the war, the government decided that coal mining was the key industry. Lack of manpower and resources had put a brake on expansion during the war and it was regarded as vital that coal production be dramatically increased so as to provide the country with the kick start that it needed in terms of energy sources. The release of miners from the Armed Forces was therefore made the top priority.

After the Armistice

When the guns finally ceased their thundering in November 1918, the first task of the Allied armies in all theatres of war was following up the defeated enemy as he withdrew under the terms of the various armistices. Demobilization did not begin until 9 December 1918, three days after British troops entered Cologne; the Government had decided that, although in theory a state of war still existed, reconstruction had to be instituted immediately. Five days later came the so-called Khaki Election, when the Country went to the polls, although the count was delayed until 28 December to allow forces' votes overseas to be included. It saw Lloyd George and his coalition returned to power with a substantial majority in the House of Commons. All, however, was not going well with demobilization. [Technically, the war was not over and the Armistice negotiations dragged on until June 1919 as is explained in the chapter on the Occupation of Germany - Editor].

Initially, it was just miners, demobilizers and pivotal men who were returned to civilian life. By the beginning of January 1919 the Army had released 110,000 miners, half of those serving, and almost 200,000 others, but 40 per cent of these were Category W men, who, although they were soldiers, had been seconded to war industries because of their special skills and hence already had civilian employment. The release of demobilizers and pivotal men was going more slowly than planned, simply because the paperwork was taking time to process. Thus, figures produced at the end of the first week of January showed that 34,500 of the former and nearly 64,000 of the latter had been identified by the Ministry of Labour, but just under half of both had been subject to release orders and of these only a quarter of demobilizers and some 6 per cent of the latter had actually been demobilized. Popular opinion, fanned by the media, was demanding immediate demobilization, as reflected in a headline in the Daily Herald of 7 December 1918: *'Send the Boys Home! Why in the World the Delay!'* This was echoed by the Daily Express later in the month: 'Will nothing bring home to the Government the seriousness of the immediate need for demobilization?' Lord Milner, the Secretary of State for War, pleaded with the Press and general public to display greater understanding of the problem, poiting out that 'to put back an army of millions of men, scattered over three continents, into civil life is just as difficult as it was to raise that giant Army.' The Government did, however, make one concession in that it allowed soldiers on home leave to take up offers of work from their prewar employers, irrespective of its nature, provided that the local employment exchange and the soldier's headquarters agreed. This 'contract scheme', as it was

21.5 Demobilized men handing in their rifles before boarding the Rhine steamer. The steamer took them to Rotterdam on their way to England. Cologne, 23 April 1919 © IWM

called, soon proved open to abuse and added to the discontent. Milner also gave warning that the war was technically not over: 'Remember that, though the fighting may have ceased, all is not yet over. Impatience and overhaste might yet rob us of all that four long years of unexampled struggle and sacrifice have won.' Britain needed to remain strong and united if a just peace was to be achieved. He also warned: 'The world, which is still in many parts seething with disorder, may not settle down for years, or let us get back to normal life and work in safety and tranquillity.' It meant that an army was still needed and in some strength. Milner's plea fell on deaf airs and, come the New Year, unrest within the army itself became manifest. It was not just the seeming slow rate of demobilization, but also resentment over the priorities. Many of those who were being released had served for a considerably shorter period than the volunteers of 1914 and 1915 and they resented this. The result of this discontent was a series of demonstrations. On 3 January 1919, 10,000 returning leave men at Folkestone objected to being made to return to France, as did 2,000 men at Folkestone the following day. ASC men drove lorries into London with placards reading: 'We won the war. Give us our tickets.' [See comment in CIGS letter to Lord Derby below - Editor]. Later in the month there was a largescale disturbance in Calais. What Haig had warned of in his letter of October 1917 had come to pass. Rumours that Bolshevik elements were stirring up trouble adding to the feeling of growing crisis, especially since there was widening opposition to the intervention in Russia. Increasing industrial unrest was also not helping matters.

21.6 Extracts from - Keith Jeffery's The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson 1918-1922 - The Army Records Society.

EXTRACTS FROM CIGS'S LETTERS

Wilson (CIGS) to Lord Derby (Secretary of State for War)
War Office.
7. 1. 19

The heart of our present troubles in the Army lies in the reckless speeches & promises made during the recent elections & in constant civilian & therefore ignorant & dangerous interference in our de-mobilization scheme. Exactly where we are drifting to - for we are drifting - I don't know. ….

Wilson to Haig
10/1/19

I have shown your telegram A.Z.310 (re unrest amongst your troops) to both Milner and Churchill. With all these games of musical chairs going on you can imagine there is not much real business being done. We have, however, got the Press into a better mood, and P.M.'s letter in the newspapers saying the war is not over and discipline must be maintained is something. I have to go to Paris tomorrow with P.M. but hope to be back early next week. I watch anxiously for the coming of the Post Bellum Army.

Allenby (Egypt/Palestine) to Wilson
The Residency,
Cairo
21st April 1919

The situation in Egypt has not improved. Outwardly there is quiet; and, in the Provinces, order prevails. This is due to the presence of my troops. The Strike continues, however, under terrorism. All Government offices are practically at a standstill. The law courts are closed in Cairo. An irreducible minimum of trains are running on the main lines & worked by military staffs. I have given the Ministry every chance to exert their influence, but they have none left and have completely failed to stop the strike. I am now going to arrest the leaders of the movement-many of them lawyers & notables-and tomorrow I issue a proclamation ordering all back to work. I should have done this last week; but the week has been one of holidays, for all creeds, ending today with a big Moslem holiday. I may have to arrest 70 to 100 leaders; but it has got to be done.

22nd April. The Prime Minister has resigned, and the fall of the Ministry will possibly have no bad-even a good-effect. Rumours are that officials return to work tomorrow. If so, good. If not, then I must make the arrests. …

I'm sorry to say that some 3,000 men at the Demobilization Camp at Kantara have refused to allow men to come on as helpers on the railways. I am working the railways by military personnel & had formed some railway companies for Kantara. Some trade union microbe has got into them; & they are obstinate, though polite, in their refusal. I can't shoot them all for mutiny; so I must carry on as best I can, & I must resume demobilization. I have wired the situation to Troopers **[the telegram address for the War Office - Editor]**; and hope that you will hasten on my promised reinforcements. The reasons given by the men was that to work on the railways wd be 'strike breaking'. However, the real reason is homesickness, & distrust of the War Office and their promises. They don't believe that reinforcements are coming; or that, if they do come, demobilization will be resumed.

23rd April-Most of the government officials have returned to work this morning; & I hope the remainder will return during the day. … Martial law will have to rule the country, for months to come, & I don't see much prospect of reducing the number of troops now garrisoning the country. Demobilization must go on, or my troops will mutiny-so I reiterate the necessity for a steady flow of reinforcements & drafts . . .

21.7 British troops to be demobilized assembled in the grounds of the Expeditionary Forces Canteen, Italy 1918 © IWM

Moreover, the Government had given little consideration as to what form of postwar army it wanted. With the coming of the Armistice on the Western Front, conscription had been halted, apart from those who had already been issued with 'call up' notices. Two days later, Milner wrote to Lloyd George stating that, while demobilization had been planned in detail there had been little consideration given to the shape of the postwar army and that there was a risk of the country being 'without any army in six months'. Lloyd George was, however, loathe to prolong conscription. Indeed, the danger of this had been used by opposition parties, notably Labour, during their recent election campaigns. Hopes, however, that voluntary enlistment might solve the problem were totally unrealistic. True, an Army Order published on 10 December 1918 offered bounties of £20, £30, and £40 to those re-enlisting for two, three, and four years, with the money being paid as equal annual increments, but during the period from the Armistice to mid January 1919 only just over 1,100 new recruits came forward. Given the existing demands on the Army, including the need to replace wartime soldiers in garrisons overseas, and rapid demobilization, this was an impossible situation. Indeed, the only measure that the Government took was to institute the Class Z Reserve, which would be formed from all those who were demobilized, with certain exceptions, like those who were no longer medically fit. This would only be called out in the event of extreme military emergency, which actually meant a resumption of hostilities.

On 10 January 1919, to stem the growing crisis, Lloyd George replaced Milner with Winston Churchill, giving him the Air Ministry as well. Churchill moved quickly. He asked Sir Auckland

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Wilson to Allenby
28th March 1920

I have owed you a letter for ever so long but I find it difficult to get time for letter writing other than dictated. Your wires about the recognition to Feisal's claims to Crownship have fluttered the Democrats! To accept a Mandate - whatever that may mean - from a King would be quite beneath the dignity of a Democrat or a Republican or an 'Allied & Associated Member!' These gentlemen can give each other whatever they want out of other peoples properties whether it be Fiume or Constantinople or Mosul or Palestine or Cilicia or German East Africa or Islands hither and thither. It is a funny world and inhabited by odd people. I confess the 'goings on' of our friends The Frocks terrify me. There is a total and absolute lack of power to govern, whether in England against the Unions, or in Ireland against the Sinn Feins or in Egypt or in India.

We used to be told when we were children that the Bourbons learnt nothing. It is quite unnecessary to go so far afield or so far back as the Bourbons for examples of people who know nothing and learn nothing. Poor things, it is pathetic to see them struggling and drifting and sinking without principles without knowledge without determination without character. Just look at Ireland. Was ever a more disgraceful and pitiable sight. They (The Frocks) will have to hand over before long to the soldiers. It is d_____ lucky you are already installed in Egypt. Poor Squib Congreve I am always robbing him of troops and he is behaving like the gentleman he is. The troops here at home are very very young and wholly untrained. When I tell you that there are in every battalion some hundreds of men who have not yet fired a recruit's course it will show you how we stand and the training is very difficult. The Administrative services being very short - we have 3,000 civilian lorry drivers and mechanics in England alone and all members of Unions and the guards and duties everywhere very heavy, for example the 7 weak battalions on the Rhine find 1167 0(ther). R(anks). On guard every day, and the 30 battalions in Ireland have an average of only 2 nights in bed. You can see our difficulties. Still if we can get peace and quiet for the next 6 months we will shake down a good deal.

I hope to see Milner this week and hear all your gossip.

My best wishes to you both…..

21.8 Extracts from - Keith Jeffery's The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson 1918-1922 © The Army Records Society

Geddes, formerly Director-General National Service and now appointed Minister of Reconstruction in place of Dr Christopher Addison, for his views on demobilization. He replied on 15 January that he believed the system as it stood was 'based on the wrong principles, and that if it is allowed to continue to operate it will produce results deplorable alike in civil life and in the forces.' He urged that men be selected to serve in the 'transitional army or armies of occupation' using some 'perfectly simple principle' like retaining all those under the age of 33 who had enlisted after the introduction of compulsory service. These men should receive a bonus or increased pay, while the remainder were all demobilized.

Churchill also established a committee to consider how this transitional army should be formed. It reported on 17 January 1919. The Committee took up the Geddes proposal that all men who had enlisted since 1 January 1916 should be retained. The exceptions should be compassionate cases and those bearing three wound stripes or more, as well as those aged over 41, demobilizers and pivotal men, although the last named should be limited to 250,000 men. This would mean retaining a total of 1.727 million men before the exceptions were taken into account. The army itself would require 250,000 men at home, which allowed for a significant portion in Ireland, where nationalist unrest was growing, 650,000 in France, which would provide the British share of the occupation force on the Rhine, as well as carrying out salvage work on the battlefields, and 250,000 in other theatres and garrisons. These figures did not include the postwar Regular Army which also needed to be formed from serving Regulars and voluntary enlistments. The Committee estimated that the exemptions would account for some 300,000 men, leaving a margin of some 227,000. It also proposed that the occupation force in Germany should be largely made up of Graduated and Young Soldiers battalions, which were training the 18 year-olds. Obviously legislation would be needed, both to retain men and to allow young soldiers to serve overseas. The Committee therefore proposed that this, and that for the Class Z Reserve, be renewed on an annual basis.

Churchill placed these proposals before the War Cabinet on 28 January 1919. Lloyd George was absent in France hammering out the peace terms with the other Allied leaders and so Bonar Law took the chair. Churchill had, however, been across the

Channel to see Lloyd George and Haig about the proposals and had obtained the former's broad agreement to them. Churchill did, however, offer some reductions in troop requirements. It had now been agreed that the garrison of the Rhine bridgeheads would be reduced from 15 to 10 divisions, although he pointed out that any drastic reduction in the army in Europe would mean that it would not be possible to provide this garrison, which would mean letting down the Allies. The number involved in salvage work could be halved to 125,000 and it had been agreed to reduce the British army garrison in India by 20,000 men. At this point Churchill drew attention to the Territorial divisions stationed there, saying that they would have to stay until the end of the year because of the non-availability of Regular troops to relieve them. Lloyd George was optimistic over reducing commitments in the Middle East and hence only 100,000 British troops were now needed there, supported by 250,000 native troops (mainly Indian). The upshot of all this was that the requirement for 1.2 million men for the transitional army was now reduced to 800,000. The remainder could be demobilized as fast as could be managed. All this received general agreement and Churchill could now press ahead.

The contracts scheme was ended. Soldiers' pay rates were doubled and the mininum enlistment age lowered from 18 to 17. The bounty system was to be maintained until the end of September 1919. Those re-enlisting had been granted two or three months' leave as an added inducement. Additionally, under Army Council Instruction No 69 dated 30 January 1919 half of each demobilization draft had to be made up by these men so that they could take this leave, as well as regular soldiers with two or more years to serve, since they were also to take home leave as soon as possible. Otherwise priority for demobilization itself was now firmly based on length of service, once the pivotals and demobilizers had been covered. Then, on 6 March 1919 the Naval, Military and Air Force Act became law, enabling compulsory military service to be maintained until the end of April 1920.

The discontent died down, apart from among the Canadian contingent. Douglas Haig had, in his letter of October 1917, stressed the importance of the overseas contingents being sent home at the same rate as demobilization in Britain. In the Canadian case there was a shortage of shipping and this brought about a serious disturbance at Rhyl (Kinmel Park) in North Wales in March 1919, when a number of men lost their lives. A few months later, Canadians broke into a police station in Epsom, Surrey and a policeman was killed. Otherwise demobilization gathered pace and by the end of March 1919 some two million men had been released back into civilian life.

Recruiting for the new regular army proceeded steadily. In November 1918 there had been some 74,000 soldiers who had enlisted under the prewar Regular terms and had at least one year still to serve. By April 1920 the strength of the new Regular Army had grown to 300,000, which included just under 75,000 re-enlistments. It had managed to relieve most of the Territorial and other wartime units overseas, although in February 1920 there were still some 35,000 men serving abroad and awaiting release. A third of these were with the Army of the Rhine and another third in Egypt. Those Territorial battalions which had served in India throughout the war had been relieved, although many of them found themselves involved in the Third Afghan War, which took place during summer 1919. With overseas commitments gradually being reduced the Government saw no need to renew its 1919 military service act and the demobilization of the remainder took place very quickly. Indeed, by the end of 1920 British forces had withdrawn from Russia and the following year saw the British army disengage from the Irish Troubles. At the same time, keen to preserve its independence, the RAF took over the policing of the former Ottoman territories in the Middle East under what was called Air Control.

Those settling back into civilian life initially enjoyed the fruits of an immediate postwar economic boom and had little difficulty in finding employment. But during the second half of 1920 the situation changed dramatically. Britain discovered that it had lost many of its prewar overseas markets and price inflation at home rapidly overheated. High interest rates to protect the pound did not help, since they discouraged the starting of new businesses. The result was that unemployment rose dramatically. The very thing that the Government had sought to avoid in its demobilization plans now happened - an ever increasing number of ex-servicemen out of work. The 'Land Fit for Heroes' that the Government had promised had proved to be no more than a mirage.

As for the new regular army, in August 1919 the Government adopted the Ten Year Rule, when it came to drawing up the defence budget. This laid down that there would be no major war in Europe for at least ten years and was renewed annually throughout the 1920s. It meant that the army's priority was once more defence of the Empire, as it had been prior to the Great War. This is not to say, though, that it ignored the lessons of the Great War, with much effort being made during the 1920s to assimilate them. The Ten Year Rule and the worsening economic situation also resulted in cuts to the Armed Forces, with the regular army being reduced to 228,000 men by May 1923, below its strength at the outbreak of war in 1914. Furthermore, while in 1914 the Army at home could mobilise six infantry division and 17 cavalry regiments for an expeditionary force, its 1923 structure meant that it could now field only two infantry divisions and three cavalry regiments. In addition, the Ten Year Rule and restricted defence budgets meant implementation of many of the war's lessons, especially in the realm of mechanized warfare, was limited. The penalty for this would be paid in spring 1940.

Further Reading

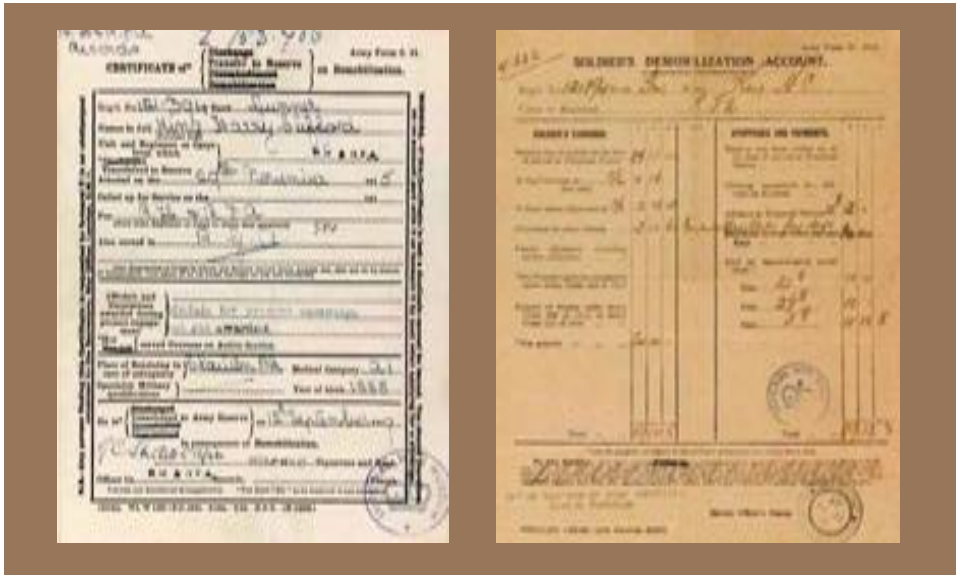
Peter Doyle *The British Soldier of the First World War* (Oxford: Shere Publications, 2010).

Gerard de Groot Blighty, *British Society in the Era of the Great War* (London: Longman, 1996.

Keith Jeffrey, *The post-war Army* in I. F. W. Beckett & K. Simpson (eds.), *A Nation in Arms. A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 211-234.

21.9 16 SS *Olympic* (a sister ship of the S.S. *Titanic*) with Returned Canadian Soldiers - Arthur Lismer © CWM - Beaverbrook Collection of War Art

21.10 Z 21 Certificate of Demobilization © IWM and 21.11 Soldier's Demobilization Account © IWM



22.1 Statue of Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, Place Charles de Gaulle, Montreuil © Colonel J D Wilson

22. Lessons Learned

23. Brigadier Richard Toomey CBE

Introduction

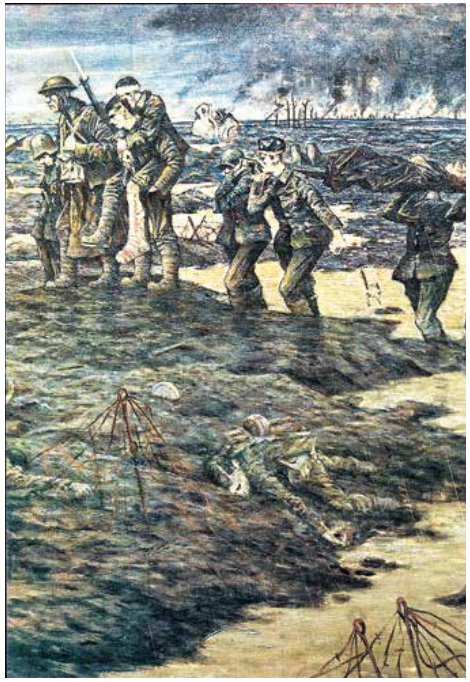
There are probably no new lessons to be learned from the British Army's experience of the First World War. The war ended nearly 100 years ago, and there have been many wars and other conflicts since, all of which have been examined in detail. The process continues: the Army is still capturing, assessing and assimilating the lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan. Even so, the lessons of the First World War are still valuable: they reveal timeless insights into the nature of conflict, and important information about its character then and to some extent now. One of the lesson-threads from the First World War that is of greatest value to the contemporary military reader is the history of British army lesson-learning itself.

The Army's critics, perhaps even conventional wisdom, would say that the leadership of the Army during and after the First World War was (and perhaps remains) incapable of learning lessons. For them, Field Marshal Haig was the prime example and leader of a senior officer class that failed to anticipate and respond to the changing character of warfare, and which during the fighting serially reinforced failure. They see little or no evidence of lesson learning during the First World War and a complete failure to learn between the wars, in stark contrast to the Germans. This narrative is flawed. In parts it is completely incorrect; in others it reveals only part of the truth. This essay argues that the British Army learned lessons well during the First World War, and after the war it identified most of the lessons of the war, but it did not absorb them adequately. The reasons why are instructive.

In the First World War the British Army had a vigorous and effective system for learning operational and tactical lessons, and incorporating them into doctrine and training. This manifested itself in the transformation of the Army between 1916 and 1918, at least on the Western Front. The Army in 1914, highly proficient but unsuited to the sheer scale of continental warfare, had taken so many casualties by the end of the First Battle of Ypres in November 1914, that it became the seed corn for Kitchener's New Army that grew through 1915. This mainly volunteer New Army had by 1918 transformed into a highly effective combined arms army. This army, with tanks and aircraft, was able to withstand (just) the 1918 German spring offensive and to launch a decisive counter-offensive over the last 100 days of the war.

Lesson Learning During the First World War

Contrary to the thrust of popular myths about the First World War and the British Army, there is good evidence that the Army, particularly the BEF on the Western Front, was a 'learning organisation'. It published over 150 notes, reports and instructions, mainly about tactics, training and tactical handling of weapons. These were mostly in the form of Stationery Service (SS) pamphlets, for example: SS 135 'Instructions for the Training of Divisions for Offensive Action' (Dec 1916)[1]; later 'The Training and Employment of Divisions' (1918), and SS 158 'Notes on Recent Operations on the Front of First, Third, Fourth and Fifth Armies' (May 1917)[2]. As Director Staff Duties before the war, Haig had overseen the production of the British Army's first formal



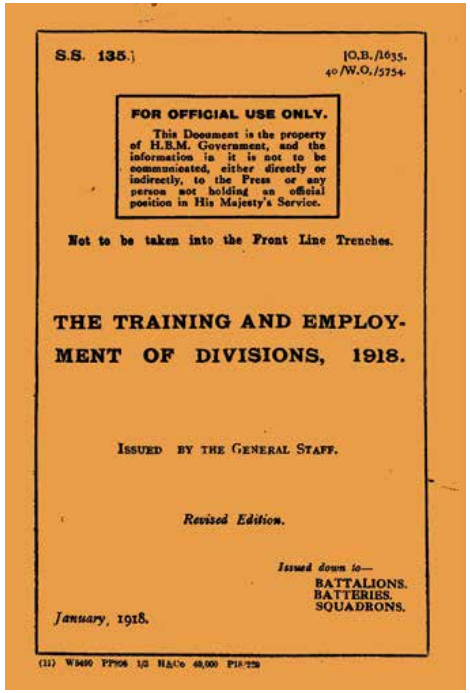
22.2 The Harvest of Battle - Nevinson © IWM

doctrine publication, Field Service Regulations (FSR) 1909[3], and his Headquarters played 'a leading role in the dissemination of lessons learnt and the publication of tactical doctrine[4]' and the direction and assessment of training which took place at up to divisional level. These lessons were informed by after-action reports compiled by the divisions and transmitted up to GHQ. The transformation of the British Army from the rapidly expanded and undertrained force of mid 1916, to the resilient and effective combined arms army of 1918 would not have been possible without this system.

Identifying the Lessons of the War

Defence Policy

British Government policy in the 1920s was underpinned by the Cabinet's 'Ten Year Rule' (which stated that no major war in Europe was to be anticipated for 10 years and so no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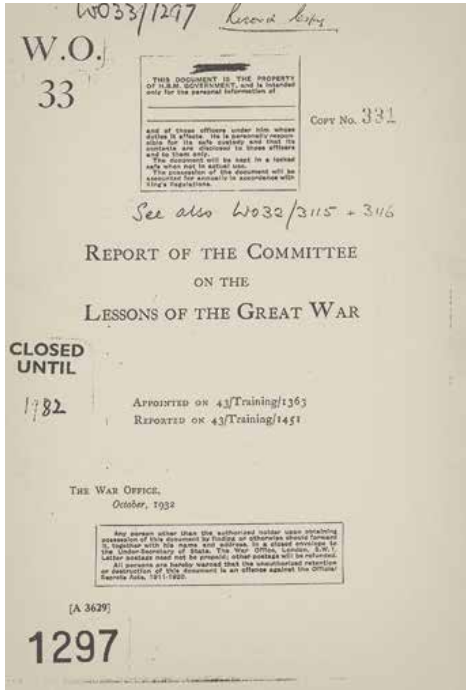
22.3 The Division in Attack © IWM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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE
ON THE
LESSONS OF THE GREAT WAR

CLOSED UNTIL
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APPOINTED ON 43/Training/1363
REPORTED ON 43/Training/1451

THE WAR OFFICE,
October, 1932

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22.4 The Kirke Report

expeditionary forces were needed for such a war) and shaped by a sharp reduction in funding. In 1919, defence expenditure fell to the equivalent of pre-war levels and the Army's share fell sharply. Resources were diverted to the Royal Navy (which was to remain 60% larger than the next largest navy in the world, excluding the US Navy[5]), and the new RAF (which of course had not existed before the war). The national focus was on home and colonial defence and colonial policing, and the Army's primary role was colonial security.

Doctrine Revision

This did not prevent the General Staff from considering the doctrine needed for another major land war. Based on the lessons of the war the Army had just fought and won, the General Staff got to work immediately and published a new edition of Field Service Regulations in 1920, updating it in 1924, 1929 and 1935. FSR 1909 has been criticised as the conceptual basis for the form of warfare conducted by the British Army during the war. Some writers see developments in the later doctrine as a major improvement, highlighting in particular major changes in the doctrine for offensive operations, such as the development of a combined arms approach, and a shift of focus away from attacking the enemy's main strength. They may overstate the case against FSR 1909. The BEF in 1914 was certainly not ready for the largest and most devastating war in history, but it did know that 'the full power of an army can be exerted only when all its parts act in close combination'[6], and it believed that 'decisive success in battle can be gained only by a vigorous offensive'[7], which would 'concentrate as large a force as possible against one decisive point'[8]. This decisive attack could be on one of the enemy's flanks, or aimed at splitting his force, but in any case it should be unexpected and in the greatest possible strength. If the British Army did not achieve this often during the First World War, the problem may not have been the doctrine, but the difficulty in applying it in unforeseen circumstances in, for example, France and at Gallipoli. However, the successes of 1918, in France, Italy, Palestine and Mesopotamia, in many cases in the kind of 'open warfare' situations foreseen in the doctrine, seem to validate significantly the general thrust of FSR 1909.

The Official History

The revision of doctrine does not necessarily require public or even internal exposure of errors or weaknesses; it simply has to communicate generalised good practice. No criticism of anyone or any organisation is required. The production of official histories of the war, was not so straightforward. They could not be too thorough, which might have damaged the reputation of the Army and some of its most senior officers. They could not simply be patriotically positive, as this too would undermine reputations (not least because they would be obviously inconsistent with the personal memoirs emerging after the war). This tension contributed to delay, and although by 1930 all the volumes had been written, publication was not completed until 1949.[9] When the volume covering the first half of 1916 (including the start of the Battle of the Somme) was published in 1932, the public response was such that the War Office immediately established a Committee to look into the lessons of the First World War: The Kirke Committee.

The Kirke Report

The Kirke Committee, headed by Lieutenant General Kirke and consisting of five major generals and two brigadiers were to investigate and report on two questions:

- What are the principal lessons to be derived from our experiences in the several theatres of the Great War as disclosed by the official histories and reports?
- Have these lessons been correctly and adequately applied in Field Service Regulations and other training manuals, and in our system of training generally?

The Kirke Report,[10] as it is known, took only a few months to prepare in 1932 (although the Report is dated 1931). The Committee members considered the lessons from the Western Front up to mid 1916, Gallipoli, Palestine up to June 1917, and Mesopotamia. There are major omissions, particularly the period from mid 1916 to the Armistice in France and Belgium, and the final decisive campaign in Palestine, although these would have been well-known to the authors. It was not distributed until 1933, and then not publicly.

The Main Report covered peace preparation, strategy and tactics, equipment and organisation, and training. The fundamental lesson of the War was the overwhelming power of defences, so it is notable that the Report concentrates mainly on offensive operations and associated issues. The lessons are strikingly prescient, considering that unknown to the authors, the Second World War was only seven years away. The following paragraphs highlight particularly relevant lessons in relation to the planning and execution of operations.

22.4 Lieutenant General Walter Kirke © IWM

The Importance of Surprise. The Report discussed the 'paramount importance of surprise both in attack and defence'. In every theatre, the success or failure in achieving surprise, either by timing, approach or method or by a combination of all three, usually determined the success or failure of offensive operations. The authors considered that FSR did not emphasise this enough and recommended the addition of a sentence to FSR: 'A commander who selects the offensive and fails to surprise his opponent has lost the main advantage which the offensive confers.' At one point the Report describes the 'vital importance of surprise and the indirect approach'.[11] The indirect approach is a concept attributed to Liddell Hart, and it is known that he was in contact with the Committee and had some influence over its thinking. The Report discusses the issue of surprise in defence, particularly in relation to concealment of machine guns, and the layout of the entire position. It finds FSR fit for purpose, but recommends greater emphasis on concealment.

The Attack. The Report addresses directly the power of contemporary defences, but concludes emphatically that success can only be achieved by offensive action. It extracted four tactical and organisational lessons for the future: an increase in artillery effectiveness (implying a rejection of calls for simply more firepower); more tanks; increase in mobility for the infantry (including a reduction in the load on individual soldiers); provision of support weapons to the infantry (mortars, medium machine guns and anti-tank guns).

Converting 'Break In' to 'Break Through'. This issue, how to make attacks decisive, is described in the Report as 'the most important and difficult question with which the war presents us'.[12] This issue is analysed in three parts: exercise of command, communications, method and means, and reserves.

In the first two the Report wrestles with the problem that as battle is joined, the commander loses control of events, and this means that he cannot continue to command. The Committee recommends a number of potential solutions, mainly aiming to improve commanders' situational awareness (armoured command vehicles, better reporting), means of communications (particularly by radio). Interestingly it concludes that until the inter-communication problem is solved, there is only one viable solution: 'to delegate authority completely to subordinate commanders, trusting to their initiative in conformity with general instructions', i.e. something like mission command. It then declares in the next sentence that 'this is not a satisfactory substitute for the continuous control from above which constitutes the difference between generalship and a mere dog fight; between reinforcing success and hammering away at failure in the manner so adversely commented on in the Official Histories of The War.'[13]

In its consideration of 'method and means' the Report says that the only successful breakthrough covered in the Official Histories at the time of writing was at the Battle of Megiddo, and notes that the attack was completed by a successful exploitation by cavalry. It identifies that armoured vehicles seem to be ideal to break in and through, but need combined arms support, including cavalry (and/or lorried infantry) following on, mainly because of the likely shortage of cross country trucks. It notes that 'the employment of reserves is the only way in which a commander can really influence the battle in modern conditions, and that without them he has ceased to be a commander.'

Orders. The Report is highly critical of the tendency during the War to produce over-detailed and unclear orders, without enough time for timely subordinate action, and without awareness of the feasibility of execution. The Main Report supports recommendations made by the authors of the appendix on Mespotamia, who are highly critical of FSR. They criticise FSR for promoting an ideal of precise and formal written orders, saying that 'the result of this teaching is that many officers are apt to be misled into thinking that, once a written order has been issued, everything will work out satisfactorily. Nothing could be more dangerous or further from the truth.'[14] They recommend that FSR should be rewritten 'on broader lines' allowing 'more general issue of instructions instead of orders, and … the use of verbal orders confirmed in writing when time permits.'

Organisation of the Army. This section, entitled 'The necessity for a comprehensive review of the proportion among the various arms' admits that the Committee had 'merely touched the fringe of the real problems in connection with organization and equipment, as affecting preparation for war in the future.' It observes that the doctrine stresses the principle of offensive action, 'but if the lessons of the War are any guide to the future it is very doubtful whether we are organized and equipped to carry out their precepts.' [15] It goes on to recommend more tanks and mechanized (lorried) infantry, and suggests that the way to achieve this without expanding the Army could be to convert infantry battalions into 'armoured infantry'. It adds that increased air co-operation should be considered.

The Report's emphasis on surprise, its recognition of the importance of offensive operations, the need for an effective (armoured) means to conduct them, and the identification of the problems of command and with orders, were all highly valid in relation to the First World War and as a forecast of the nature of future warfare.

Learning the Lessons of the War

The Kirke Committee was thorough and prescient in its examination of four campaigns and recommendations, but identifying lessons is not the same as learning lessons. The British Army today regards that a lesson is not learned until it has been absorbed into capability: particularly into doctrine, equipment, and education and training, all of which needs to be supported by policy. The early battles against Germany between 1940 up to El Alamein in October 1942, and against Japan in 1941 and 1942 suggest that the lessons identified were not learned.

Doctrine

The next edition of FSR after the production of the Kirke Report was in 1935.[16] It addresses all the significant lessons identified.

Surprise. FSR Vol III 1935 includes principles of war, including surprise. In the section on offensive operations ('the offensive battle') security, deception and surprise are threaded throughout.

Attack. FSR Vol III 1935 includes offensive action as a principle of war, and states clearly that 'victory cannot be won by passive defence' and that it 'confers - liberty of action, heightened morale [and] power to force the enemy to conform'.

Break In to Break Through. The chapter in FSR Vol III 1935 on 'the offensive battle' starts with three pages on 'envelopment and penetration' and goes on to describe the use of armour and mechanized brigades to attack weakness, conduct envelopment, exploit initial success and conduct pursuit. It also describes the role of air power in attacking approaching reserves, and turning enemy withdrawal into rout.

Orders. FSR Vol III 1935 says that 'a commander will allot [subordinates] definite tasks, clearly explaining his intentions, and will then allow them liberty of action in arranging the methods by which they will carry out these tasks.' To a modern military reader, this sounds like mission command, although it is not expanded on further in FSR Vol III. The rather rigid practice of command was exposed in the early part of the Second World War, but fundamentally remained the Army's approach, during and after that war.

Other Changes to Capability

Equipment. The Army went through a programme of mechanization in the 1930s, but re-armament did not begin formally until 1935. Even then it was limited, as the economy was in a poor state, the Navy and RAF were priorities, and there was no government intent to equip a full-size army. The result was that in 1939 the Army had neither the types nor amount of equipment to fulfil its doctrine; in particular its tanks. Then of course, as a result in part of its weakness, it left most of what it did have at Dunkirk in 1940.

Training. David French describes the inter-war Army as having an 'indulgent approach to the interpretation of doctrine'.[17] He attributes this to a British cultural dislike of 'abstract reason and prescriptive rules'. More practically, the Army was spread all over the world, often actually conducting security operations, and training was delegated to 3 and 4 star commanders each with their own interpretations of doctrine. French explains that it was not until 1939 when two very senior officers were made inspector generals, one for overseas (Ironside, who became the CIGS) and one for home forces (Kirke, who had chaired the Committee). The Army did not carry through the lessons into trining, although they had been identified well in training.

Experimentation

In the late 1920s the British conducted an armoured experiment. The Experimental Mechanized Force was a brigade formed in 1927 and disbanded in 1929. It was a combined arms brigade and developed tactics. By the time the Army went to war in 1939 it had not fully learnt the lessons, because it was unable to follow up the doctrine with the necessary equipment, there were flaws in organisation and the training was not able to confirm and improve practice.

Other Countries

It is instructive to compare the effectiveness of lesson learning in the UK following the First World War, with Germany and France.

Germany. Only Germany effectively learned the lessons of the First World War, with the evidence being its conduct of land operations, particularly in the first 3 years of the Second World War. In 1921 the Reichswehr published new doctrine, which was replaced in 1933 by Truppenführung. Truppenführung and FSR 1935 were conceptually similar; Britain and Germany had broadly identified the same lessons. Perhaps this explains why Rommel is supposed to have said: "The British write some of the best doctrine in the world; it is fortunate that their officers do not read it."[18] The major doctrinal difference was the emphasis in German command doctrine of auftragstaktik (mission command) and the requirement for commanders not to be in their headquarters, but forward, boldly leading at the point of decision.[19] As with the British, doctrine without supporting policy, equipment and training, does not constitute lessons actually learned in the form of capability. In Germany, after Hitler came to power in 1933 all these components were aligned. Germany wanted the means to fight an offensive war, it was unequivocal about developing the equipment, and improved the doctrine and capability with extensive training and experimentation.

France. In France, the lessons of the First World War were studied very carefully, but they reached different conclusions to the British and Germans. They concluded that the next war would be long and similar to the victorious campaigns of late 1918. They believed that the defensive battle, supported by overwhelming firepower and local counter attacks, was the most powerful operation of war. Manoeuvre was secondary to firepower.[20] Victory would be crowned by a strategic offensive once the enemy had been broken by the firepower of the defensive. Knowing that France had no intention of offensive war (unlike Germany), it is hard to imagine that it could have come to any other conclusion, given that forward defence of territory was the principal task of the Army. France did have many tanks at the start of the Second World War, but the official doctrine about their use was fundamentally defensive. Of interest is the fact that the original French solution to the dilemma of fast tanks and slow infantry was to govern the tanks to walking speed (ignored by the tank inspectorate), the British solution was lorries, and the German solution was panzergrenadiers in armoured half-tracks.

Conclusion - Lessons About Learning Lessons

Identifying lessons, even if they are identified correctly, is not the same as learning them. The British Army in the First World War had a vigorous and effective system for learning lessons. Not every stage of force development during the War was correct first time, but the overall development of the Army between 1916 and the end of the War was striking, and successful.

After the War, the Army made a conscious effort to learn lessons to inform development for the next major war, and incorporated these lessons into continuously evolving doctrine. The Kirke Committee both validated and contributed to this process and the Army's doctrine in 1935 was presciently well-suited to the Second World War. There was one major failing: command doctrine. Even then, the British approach to battles such as El Alamein and campaigns such as Normandy, was generally successful. The lessons captured in doctrine were not reflected in national policy, equipment or training. So, despite conceptual success, Britain and her Army failed adequately to learn the lessons of the First World War, because it could not turn the lessons into capability.

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Whilst every effort has been made to trace the copyright holders of photographs, in some cases this has not proved possible. The editor and publishers would welcome any information that would enable such omissions to be rectified in future editions.

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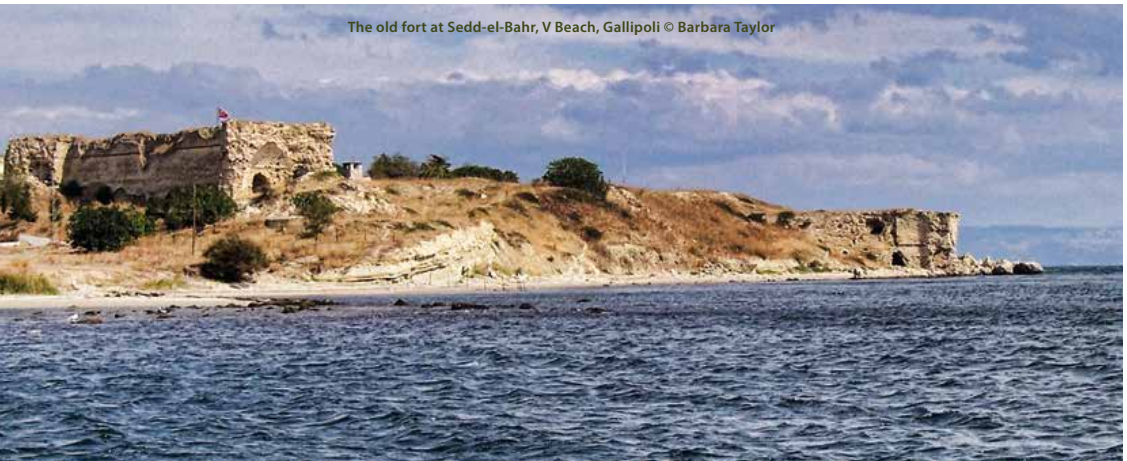


The old fort at Sedd-el-Bahr, V Beach, Gallipoli © Barbara Taylor

Contributors

Lieutenant Colonel Paolo Capanni
Lieutenant Colonel Paolo Capanni is a Medical Officer in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He has served on operations in Cyprus, Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Kosovo and Iraq, and has recently finished Commanding 1 Armoured Medical Regiment in Bergen-Hohne, Germany. Attendance on the Advanced Command and Staff Course, along with a lifelong interest in military history, spurred his research into the First World War in Italy, where his grandfather saw service.

Sebastian Cox
Sebastian Cox is the Head of the Air Historical Branch (RAF) in the Ministry of Defence and a Co-Director of the Royal Air Force Centre for Air Power Studies. He is a Trustee of the Society for Military History and serves on the Research Advisory Board of the RAF Museum.

Colonel Michael Crawshaw OBE
Colonel Michael Crawshaw retired from the British Army in 1992 to edit the British Army Review, a position he held until 2002. Later he was editor for ARAG and the Research and Assessment Branch at the Defence Academy, where he authored Running a Country: The British Colonial Experience and its Relevance to Present Day Concerns (2007). He now writes historical fiction to take his mind off contemporary realities.

Bob Evans
Bob Evans is the Head of Historical Branch (Army). He served for many years in the Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police.

Professor David French
David French is Professor Emeritus as University College London. He is a Fellow of both the Royal Historical Society and the Historical Association, as well as being, inter alia, the author of several books on the evolution of British strategic policy before and during the First World War.

Professor Eric Grove
Eric Grove became a civilian lecturer at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth in 1971 and left at the end of 1984 as Deputy Head of Strategic Studies. In 1993 he joined the University of Hull where he became Reader in Politics and International Studies and Director of the Centre for Security Studies. In 2005 Dr Grove moved to the University of Salford where he became Professor of Naval History and Director of the Centre for International Security and War Studies. He is now an independent naval historian, maritime strategist and international security analyst. His many books include:- Vanguard to Trident The Future of Sea Power; Sea Battles in Close-Up; The Price of Disobedience and The Royal Navy Since 1815. Eric Grove is a Vice President and Fellow of the Society for Nautical Research and a member of Council of the Navy Records Society. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, and a First Sea Lord's Fellow contributing to British naval policy.

Peter Hart
Peter Hart has been an oral historian at the Sound Archive of Imperial War Museum in London since 1981. He has written mainly on British participation in the First World War. His books include; The Somme, Jutland 1916, Bloody April on the air war in 1917, Passchendaele, Aces Falling (on the air war in 1918), 1918 A Very British Victory and Gallipoli, Voices from the Front (A British oral history of the Great War) and Fire and Movement (A history of the 1914 campaign).

Dr Robert Johnson
Rob Johnson is Senior Research Fellow, Changing Character of War at Pembroke College, Oxford. His specialist areas are the History of War in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with particular interest in the First World War, the Indian Army and the so-called 'sideshows'; the Inter-War Years, and more recent conflicts in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and the Middle East. His recent books include: The Afghan Way of War (2011) and The Iran-Iraq War (2010).

Professor Greg Kennedy
Greg Kennedy taught both History and War Studies as an adjunct professor at Royal Military College of Canada. He joined King's College London in 2000, and is based at the Joint Services Command and Staff College in Shrivenham. Kennedy is a member of the British Empire at War Research Group and serves as the Director of the Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies, a think tank based out of the Defence Studies Department at King's College London. In 2002, Kennedy was awarded the Theodore and Franklin D. Roosevelt Prize in Naval History for his book Anglo-American Strategic Relations and the Far East 1933-1939. In 2011, he was also the recipient of the Society for Military History's Moncado Award.

Charles Messenger
Charles Messenger served for twenty years as a Regular officer and thirteen as a Territorial in the Royal Tank Regiment. He is the author of over forty books on military history and defence matters. His titles include Call to Arms: The British Army 1914-18 (2005) and The Day We Won the War: Turning Point at Amiens, 8 August 1918 (2008). He is currently working on Volume 4 of his Regiment's history, which will be published in 2017.

Kevin Myers
Kevin Myers is a writer, journalist and historian of the Irish soldier and Ireland. He has had a long and distinguished career as a journalist with the *Irish Times*, the *Irish Independent*, the *Sunday Telegraph*, the *Sunday Times* and the *Spectator*. He has written a novel set in the Italian campaign of World War 2 – *Banks of Green Willow*, a memoir from his time reporting the Troubles in Northern Ireland – *Watching the Door* and several books of his collected journalism. He has recently published a memoir of his early life – *A Single Headstrong Heart*. He talks in public widely on Ireland and the Great War and can claim much of the credit for legitimising discussion and research within Ireland on the place of the Irish soldier in the British army. He lives in Co Kildare.

Dr John Peaty FRGS FRHistS

John Peaty is an alumnus of the Department of War Studies at King's College London. He works for the Ministry of Defence, where he was formerly at the Army Historical Branch. He is International Secretary of the British Commission for Military History and Templer Chair of the Society for Army Historical Research. An inveterate battlefield tourer, he has published articles and essays and lectured widely on military history.

Professor William Philpott

William Philpott is Professor of the History of Warfare in the Department of War Studies, King's College London. He is a specialist in the history of the two world wars and Anglo-French relations. He is the author of Attrition: Fighting the First World War (2014) and Bloody Victory: The Sacrifice on the Somme (2009). He is a former Secretary General of the British Commission for Military History and a trustee of the National Army Museum.

Lieutenant General Jonathon Riley CB DSO PhD MA

Jonathon Riley is a military historian and visiting lecturer at Birmingham University and King's College London, Department of War Studies. He is also a guest speaker and lecturer on Military and Defence Security around the globe. As Chairman of Trustees of the Royal Welch Fusiliers Museum Trust, more recently, Lieutenant-General Riley has been elected to the British Commission for Military History and the WW1 Commemorations Board.

John Ross

John Ross has a background in historical research. He has worked as a Historical Analyst for the British Army's Land Warfare Centre, writing historical vignettes and case studies for new tactical doctrine publications. He is currently a part-time research student in the Department of War Studies, King's College London. His research is on the Development of Command and Control in the Navy during the Second World War. He also works as a Battlefield Guide.

Professor Sir Hew Strachan DL

Sir Hew Strachan has been Professor of International Relations at the University of St Andrews and an Emeritus Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford since 2015. He was Chichele Professor of the History of War at the University of Oxford between 2002 and 2015, and Director of the Oxford Programme on the Changing Character of War between 2003 and 2012. He is a Trustee of the Imperial War Museum, a Commonwealth War Graves Commissioner, and a member of both the UK National Committee for the Centenary of the First World War and the Council of the International Institute of Strategic Studies.

Barbara Taylor

Barbara Taylor was employed at the Defence Geographic Centre and is the lead cartographer for the Army Battlefield Guide of the First World War. A career draughtswoman and First World War expert in her own right, she is a long standing member of the Western Front Association and is now chairman of Thames Valley Branch; she is also a member of the Battlefields Trust. Her maps in military histories, many written by fellow members of the British Commission for Military History members, have been critically acclaimed.

Brigadier Richard Toomey CBE MA

Richard Toomey is the Assistant Chief of Staff (Warfare) at Army Headquarters. He originally joined the Devon & Dorset Regiment (now the Rifles) and in 2000 commanded 1st Battalion The Devon & Dorset Regiment. Subsequently he commanded 1 Mechanized Brigade and in 2010 was the Chief of Defence Staff's Liaison Officer to the Chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington DC.

Professor Michael Tyquin

Major Michael Tyquin is a member of the Professional Historians' Association of New South Wales, member Royal Australian Historical Society; member Australian and New Zealand Society of the History of Medicine; serving officer, Royal Australian Army Medical Corps.

Alan Wakefield

Alan Wakefield graduated from the University of Reading with a degree in History and followed this with an MA in War Studies from King's College London. He worked as a curator at the National Maritime Museum and RAF Museum, and qualified with an MA in Museum Studies from University College London. For the past five years Alan has been responsible for the curatorial team managing the IWM Photograph Archive. In 2004 he co-authored Under the Devil's Eye: Britain's Forgotten Army at Salonika 1915-1918. He is currently working on a book about First World War campaign in Mesopotamia and is the Chairman of the Salonika Campaign Society and is a member of the British Commission for Military History.

Lieutenant Colonel Nick Weekes AE MA

Nick Weekes' military career (most of which was spent in The Royal Irish Rangers) came to an end in 1994 under the 'Options for Change' redundancies. He then read for a Master's degree at the University of Leeds before launching on a second career (albeit part-time) as an archival reviewer in the Cabinet Office. Alongside this employment he served as a Royal Air Force volunteer reservist until 2007. He retired from the Cabinet Office in 2014.

Colonel John Wilson

John Wilson was a gunner officer for thirty six years which included command of a field battery and a field regiment and reading for a MPhil in International Relations at Cambridge. He completed his service as Defence Attaché in Dublin. He subsequently edited the British Army Review for nine years. He is a member of the Council of the Army Records Society.

Annemarie Seager

Annemarie Seager is Head of Profession for MOD Graphics and heads the Army Design Studio. The studio employs designers with a wide range of skills including: 3D and 2D modelling; animation; design and publishing; production of blended learning courseware; design and coding of intelligent online forms; apps; business stationery; illustration and branding.

Campaign Summary: Turkey, Trans-Caucasia and South Russia

(From Chapter 17 - Page 187)

	Allied	Bolshevist, Turkish and Azerbaijani Constantinople and Turkey
Commanders	**British** **Constantinople and Turkey** Admiral Sir John de Robeck, General Sir George Milne, General Tim Harington, Major-General Edmund Ironside **Trans-Caucasia** Major-General William Thompson Major-General George Forestier-Walker, Brigadier-General Lionel Dunsterville **South Russia Military Mission** Brigadier-General J.S.J. Percy **White Russian and Armenian:** General Lazar Bicharakhov, General Grigori Korganov,General Dokuchaev **Black Sea and South Russia:** General Anton Denikin, General Pyotr Wrangel, Ataman Alexei Kaledin	**Constantinople and Turkey** Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Ali Sait Pasha, Selahattin Adil Pasha **Trans-Caucasia** General Nuri Pasha, General Mursel Bey, General Ali-Agha Shikhlinski General Nikolai Baratov
Forces	**Constantinople and Turkey** 28th Infantry Division **Trans-Caucasia** Dunsterforce (1918): 39 Infantry Brigade (-), 14th Indian Division (-) from North Persia (Baku), 27th Infantry Division from Salonika (Tiflis) **South Russia** British Military Mission White Russian Volunteer Army Don Cossacks Kuban Cossacks	**Constantinople and Turkey** VI and XXV Ottoman Corps **Trans-Caucasia** Ottoman Islamic Army of the Caucasus: Ottoman 5th Caucasian and 15th Divisions, the Azerbaijani Muslim Corps **South Russia** Eleventh and Twelfth Red Armies
Context	Occupation of Constantinople and the Straits; Trans-Caucasian and South Russian intervention; Russian Civil War	
Consequences	Allied withdrawal from Turkey; Allied withdrawal from Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia; Red victory in the Russian Civil War and the establishment of Communist rule; Soviet annexation of the Trans-Caucasian republics; persecution and massacres of Christians by Communists and Muslims.	

Appendix 1
Deployment and Strength of the British Army 1914

General Monthly Return of the Regimental Strengths of the British Army July 1914

Command	Officers	WOs	SNCOs / Men	All Ranks	Horses / Mules	Fd Guns
Aldershot	1216	125	25104	26445		108
Eastern (Horse Guards)	1069	174	22642	23885		74
Irish (Dublin)	1077	146	24015	25238		144
London District	347	49	6645	7041		
Northern (York)	346	62	6032	6440		24
Scottish (Edinburgh)	274	52	4743	5069		30
Southern (Salisbury)	1085	169	22,894	24148		142
Western (Chester)	264	55	4470	4789		36
Guernsey and Alderney	35	7	886	928		
Jersey	39	3	810	852		
Miscellaneous	324	4	327	655		
Home Total Establishment	**6,163**	**878**	**129665**	**136726**	**24674**	
Strength (Effectives)			**118568**	**125490**	**22613**	**558**

Command	Officers	WOs	SNCOs / Men	All Ranks	Horses / Mules	Fd Guns
India						
Northern Army	1395	87	38957	40439		
Southern Army	1181	75	33031	34287		
Totals Establishment	3044	162	72690	75896	21458	
Strengths (Effectives)	2957	162	71991	75110		
South Africa						
Establishment	289	48	6779	7116	1376	
Strengths (Effectives)	282	52	6763	7097		
West Africa						
Establishment	120	10	2357	2487	4	
Strengths (Effectives)	114	15	2376	2505		
Bermuda						
Establishment	64	10	1243	1317	13	
Strengths (Effectives)	63	9	1263	1335		
Ceylon						
Establishment	54	8	1209	1271	5	
Strengths (Effectives)	**53**	**8**	**1151**	**1212**		
China (North - Pekin and China Force)						
Establishment	107	11	2854	2972	68	
Strengths (Effectives)	103	9	2744	2856	280	
China (South-Hong Kong)						
Establishment	166	17	4067	4250	16	
Strengths (Effectives)	230	19	5838	6087		

Command	Officers	WOs	SNCOs / Men	All Ranks	Horses / Mules	Fd Guns
Cyprus						
Establishment	5		116	121		
Strengths (Effectives)	5		118	123		
Gibraltar						
Establishment	154	31	3674	3859	33	
Strengths (Effectives)	148	28	3645	3821		
Jamaica						
Establishment	52	6	999	1057	8	
Strengths (Effectives)	48	6	973	1027		
Malta						
Establishment	299	39	7068	7406	59	
Strengths (Effectives)	277	39	6649	6965	4	
Mauritus						
Establishment	44	8	835	887	9	
Strengths (Effectives)	46	8	846	900		
Straits Settlements Singapore						
Establishment	102	8	2370	2480	14	
Strengths (Effectives)	101	8	2289	2389	2	
Egypt						
Establishment	221	25	6018	6264	985	
Strengths (Effectives)	220	24	6036	6280		12
Miscellaneous	54	4	383	441		
Scutari (Albania)	**63**		**359**	**422**		
Depots (India)	**22**		**591**	**613**		
India and Colonies Summary Totals						
Establishment	**1731**	**221**	**39593**	**41545**	**2590**	
Strengths (Effectives)	**1775**	**225**	**41660**	**43660**		

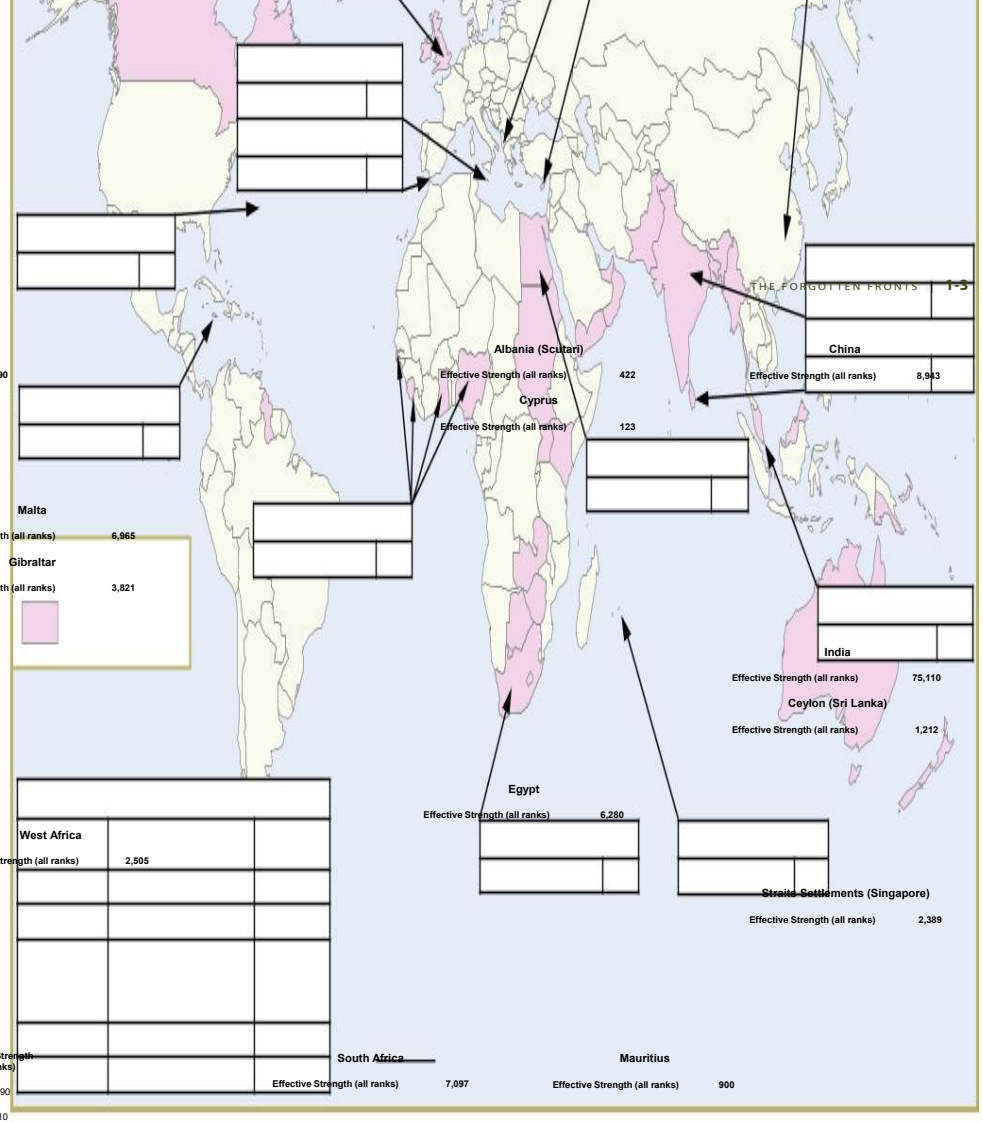
Effective Strength of the Regimental Establishments of the Army Compared with the Numbers Provided in the Army Estimates for 1914-1915, Distinguishing the British and Indian Establishments

	Numbers Provided In Army Estimates For 1914-1915 For Regimental Establishments						Effectives							
	Officers	WOs	Sgts	Trumpeters, Drummers or Buglers	Rank & File	All Ranks	Officers	WOs	Sgts	Trumpeters, Drummers or Buglers	Rank & File	All Ranks	More Than Estimate	Less Than Estimate
British Establishment														
Household Cavalry (a)	81	6	165	24	1029	1305	81	5	165	24	1034	1309	4	
Cavalry of the Line	475	39	963	131	11805	13413	478	40	954	129	11354	12995		458
Royal Horse and Field Artillery	702	46	1150	276	16215	18389	730	46	1131	271	15592	17770		619
Royal Garrison Artillery	611	71	1050	188	12061	13990	611	70	1053	176	11767	13677		313
Artillery Clerks		18	150		22	190		18	135		38	191	1	
Royal Engineers	695	129	1299	139	7630	9892	677	131	1251	110	7846	10015	123	
Royal Flying Corps (Military Wing)	165	19	156		1089	1429	97	10	101		934	1142		287
Foot Guards	277	18	434	165	6522	7416	274	16	428	152	6476	7346		70
Infantry of the Line	3137	295	6153	2527	76271	88383	3,101	297	6002	2361	68020	79781		8602
Army Service Corps	456	213	944	45	4647	6305	458	199	945	35	4728	6365	60	
Royal Army Medical Corps (b)	657	55	476	28	3238	4454	653	55	455	27	3309	4499	45	
Army Veterinary Corps (b)	96	2	47		200	345	82	2	49		159	292		53
Army Ordinance Department and Corps	232	136	706	12	1342	2428	229	131	707	9	1282	2358		70
Army Pay Corps		44	517			561		42	491		45	578	17	
Colonial Corps and Indian Infantry (including depots in India)	298	7	413	135	7889	8742	379	9	506	160	9795	10849	2107	
Miscellaneous Indian Troops-North China	2	1	5		21	29	1		2		20	23		6
The 'Pool'	10				990	1000	7851							1000
Total British Establishment	**7894**	**1099**	**14637**	**3,670**	**150971**	**178271**		**1071**	**14375**	**3,454**	**142399**	**169150**		**1000**
Indian Establishment														
Cavalry of the Line	243	18	477	81	4797	5616	234	20	476	79	4894	5703	87	
Royal Horse and Field Artillery	380	15	684	127	9691	10897	367	15	732	110	9319	10543		354
Royal Garrison Artillery	199	15	302	73	4238	4827	193	15	288	67	3915	4478		349
Royal Engineers	377		3			380	376		3			379		1
Infantry of the Line	1456	104	2345	857	48880	53642	1400	101	2353	817	48797	53468		174
Royal Army Medical Corps	321					321	317					317		4
Army Veterinary Corps	63					63	65					65	2	
Army Ordinance Department and Corp	5	10	135			150	5	11	141			157	7	
Total Indian Establishment	**3044**	**162**	**3946**	**1138**	**67606**	**75896**	**2957**	**162**	**3993**	**1073**	**66925**	**75110**		**786**
GENERAL TOTAL	**10938**	**1261**	**18583**	**4808**	**218577**	**254167**	**10808**	**1233**	**18368**	**4527**	**209324**	**244260**		**9907**

General Summary
Home and Abroad

	Numbers Provided In Army Estimates For 1914-1915 For Regimental Establishments						
	Officers	WOs	Sgts	Trumpeters, Drummers or Buglers	Rank & File	All Ranks	Horses
Home	6163	878	11724	3031	114930	136726	23300
India	3044	162	3946	1138	67606	75896	21458
Colonies & Egypt							
British Troops	1431	213	2495	504	28131	32774	2583
Colonial Troops	143	7	213	55	3689	4107	7
Indian Troops	157	1	205	80	4221	4664	
Total, Colonies	**1731**	**221**	**2913**	**639**	**36041**	**41545**	**2590**
GENERAL TOTAL	**10938**	**1261**	**18583**	**4808**	**218577**	**254167**	**47348**
	Effectives						
	Officers	WOs	Sgts	Trumpeters, Drummers or Buglers	Rank & File	All Ranks	Horses
Home	6076	846	11379	2832	104357	125490	
India	2957	162	3993	1073	66925	75110	
Colonies & Egypt							
British Troops	1395	216	2488	462	28227	32788	
Colonial Troops	141	7	214	51	3402	3815	
Indian Troops	239	2	294	109	6413	7057	
Total, Colonies	**1775**	**225**	**2996**	**622**	**38042**	**43660**	
GENERAL TOTAL	**10808**	**1233**	**18368**	**4527**	**209324**	**244260**	

Map A-1.1 Pre-War July 1914



General Summary: Home and Abroad

	Army Estimates for 1914-15 for Regimental Establishments (all ranks)	Effective Strength (all ranks)
Home	136,726	125,490
India	75,896	75,110
Colonies and Egypt:		
British troops	32,774	32,788
Colonial troops	4,107	3,815
Indian troops	4,664	7,057+
Total; Colonies	41,545	43,660
Totals	**254,167**	**244,260**

For tables in full, see preceding pages.

Please note: This map is approximate, for indicative purposes only. This is derived from a modern map and not all boundaries are necessarily correct as 1914-18 or as in the aftermath of the war. Not to scale.

Appendix 2
British Military Liabilities 1920

Minute to Cabinet by Winston Churchill Secretary of State and Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson CIGS

THE CABINET.

BRITISH MILITARY LIABILITIES.

MEMORANDUM BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR

I circulate to my colleagues two papers by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the Chief of the Air Staff on the present state of our military and aerial resources and their relations to our commitments.

The situation is one which requires a general review and a number of specific decisions. I am sure we are trying to do too much with our present forces and certainly it is impossible, within the present financial limits for me to continue to meet the varied and numerous obligations of our policy. I submit the following specific questions about which I feel we ought to reach conclusions:—

1. Are we to defend Persia or not? If we do not, Persia will be demoralized by Russian Bolshevism and thereafter devoured by Russian Imperialism. If we do we shall, in all probability, find ourselves drawn into a very considerable and indefinite entanglement. It seems very easy to send a few hundred men to Teheran; we shall not find it so easy to take them away.
2. Are we to go on with the policy of trying to reduce our garrison in Mesopotamia at the end of this financial year to half what it was at the beginning? If so, I think we must at once evacuate Persia and abandon, for a certain number of years at any rate, Mosul, and withdraw everywhere to our railheads. This means leaving our many half-fulfilled responsibilities in the extended regions which have been occupied to the mercy of the Arabs and Kurds. On the other hand, a decision to make our will effective by vigorous action in the Mosul area must delay indefinitely that process of military reduction which I have been enforcing severely upon the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia.
3. Are we in regard to Mesopotamia and, later on, Palestine to transfer the military responsibilities for maintaining internal order from the War Office to the Air Ministry, as indicated in the various papers on this subject I circulated some weeks ago?
4. Are we to proceed to reduce our garrison at Constantinople to the quota agreed upon with France and Italy, i.e., six battalions apiece? If we do, who will have the command? Will the disunited tripartite army be sufficient to defend Constantinople from the Turkish Nationalists and to maintain order in the city? Alternatively, are we to hold on with the effective British control by land and sea, in spite of the cost and of the odium, until the situation develops a good deal further?
5. What Department is to be responsible for the civil administration of Mesopotamia? And, secondly, not necessarily simultaneously, is that same Department to be responsible for Palestine and Egypt?

Prompt and clear decisions on these points would greatly facilitate departmental administration.

W. S. C.
THE WAR OFFICE,
15th June, 1920.

Introduction

THE WAR OFFICE,

15th June, 1920.

Secretary of State,

1. The attached memorandum on British Military Liabilities has been drawn up primarily with a view to forecasting the necessary arrangements to be made for moves during the forthcoming trooping season and to give the Ministry of Shipping the information for which they are pressing.

   The situation revealed by this review is most, disquieting. I would respectfully urge that the earnest attention of His Majesty's Government may be given to this question with a view to our policy being brought into some relation with the military forces available to support it. At present this is far from being the case.
2. Is it realized that at the present moment we have absolutely no reserves whatever (in formations) with which to reinforce our garrisons in any part of the world where an emergency may at any moment develop without warning?
3. The present garrison in Ireland is 1,500 rifles below the minimum of 25,000, and a considerable number even of these are both immature and only partially trained.
4. The garrison of Great Britain, consisting as it does almost entirely of raw recruits and newly-formed units with many young and inexperienced officers, is even now below the strength of 30,000 rifles which has been laid down as the minimum required to preserve internal order in case of industrial trouble, and from this attenuated force six more infantry battalions are being held in readiness to move to Ireland at short notice, in addition to the two recently despatched.
5. The Army Reserve is practically non-existent (see Adjutant-Generals paper attached), and we have no means of mobilising even one complete division for service abroad, except by breaking up other formations in this country and thereby still further depleting the minimum garrisons. At the same time the situation in India and the Middle East is such that we may at any moment be called on to send a force of from 3 to 5 divisions to succour the British garrisons in those territories, which have been for many months, and are now, strained to the utmost in policing vast areas under conditions of hardship and discomfort which militate against discipline, training and contentment. Up till the present the prestige of British arms and confidence in the justice of British administration have saved us from such disasters as now threaten to overwhelm the French in Syria and Cilicia, but there are not wanting signs that this respite will not be of unlimited duration.
6. I cannot too strongly press on the Government the danger, the extreme danger, of His Majesty's Army being spread all over the world, strong nowhere, weak everywhere, and with no reserve to save a dangerous situation or to avert a coming danger. And I would add a word of warning about the continued discomfort of the troops, whether in Persia or Mesopotamia, in Egypt or in Palestine, in the Black Sea or in Ireland, a discomfort both for the troops and for the married families, which not only militates against training and discipline, but which may very easily develop into a discontent which would be disastrous alike to the Army and the Empire.

Although it is not my province to offer advice as to policy, I may perhaps be pardoned for suggesting the lines on which relief may be afforded to our highly tried troops. My proposals, therefore, are as follows:—

i. The withdrawal of our 3 battalions from the Plebiscite areas.

ii. The reduction of the Army of the Black Sea to 6 battalions and the necessary complementary troops. This involves the withdrawal of the British garrison from Batoum, which I have constantly advocated, and would mean the withdrawal of 15 battalions from the Army of the Black Sea.

iii. The complete withdrawal of British forces from Persia, which will save us 11 battalions. A definite decision on the policy to be observed as regards Persia is imperative; otherwise, not only will no reduction be possible in the present garrison but we shall almost inevitably find ourselves committed to a process of gradual reinforcement which may entail unlimited liabilities. In this connection may I remind the Cabinet of the North Russian Expedition which, beginning with a landing of 150 men at Murmansk, in the absence of a definite policy absorbed nearly 20,000 British troops before it ended.

   At the same time it is only fair to point out that the Anglo-Persian Agreement was negotiated last year without any previous reference to the War Office, and therefore the General Staff were given no opportunity of expressing an opinion as to military commitments thereby involved or as to the possibility of meeting them. Since then our scanty forces have been strained to the utmost limit of safety and endurance in furtherance of the Foreign Office policy, although the latter appears to lack the support of His Majesty's Government as a whole, since financial provision has not been made for the maintenance of the necessary troops nor for the construction of the essential railways. The time has now arrived when this situation can no longer continue, and I must respectively press for a definite answer to the following question:—

   Is it the intention of His Majesty's Government to incur the financial burden of maintaining a strong force in Persia in support of the Anglo-Persian Agreement, bearing in mind that this policy may entail the eventual possibility of war with Russia in these regions?

   If this is not their intention, there is no other course now open to us from a military point of view but to withdraw British and Indian troops entirely from Persia and to concentrate such forces as we have for the defence and security of those territories for which this country is directly responsible.

7. If the above proposals are accepted, the saving effected (apart from machine-gun units equivalent to 6 battalions and 1 cavalry regiment) will amount to:—

	British	Indian	Total
From Plebiscite Areas	3		3
From Army of Black Sea	4	11	15
From Persia	3	8	11
Total Battalions			**29**

A proportionate saving in other arms and services will be effected at the same time.

Most of the Indian units thus rendered surplus are due for repatriation, which will result in a big financial saving to the Treasury, and will enable the early reorganization of the Indian Army on a peace basis to be completed. From the 10 British infantry battalions so saved we shall be able to send five battalions to complete India's requirements, and one to Hong Kong, placing the remaining four battalions in reserve as may be most convenient.

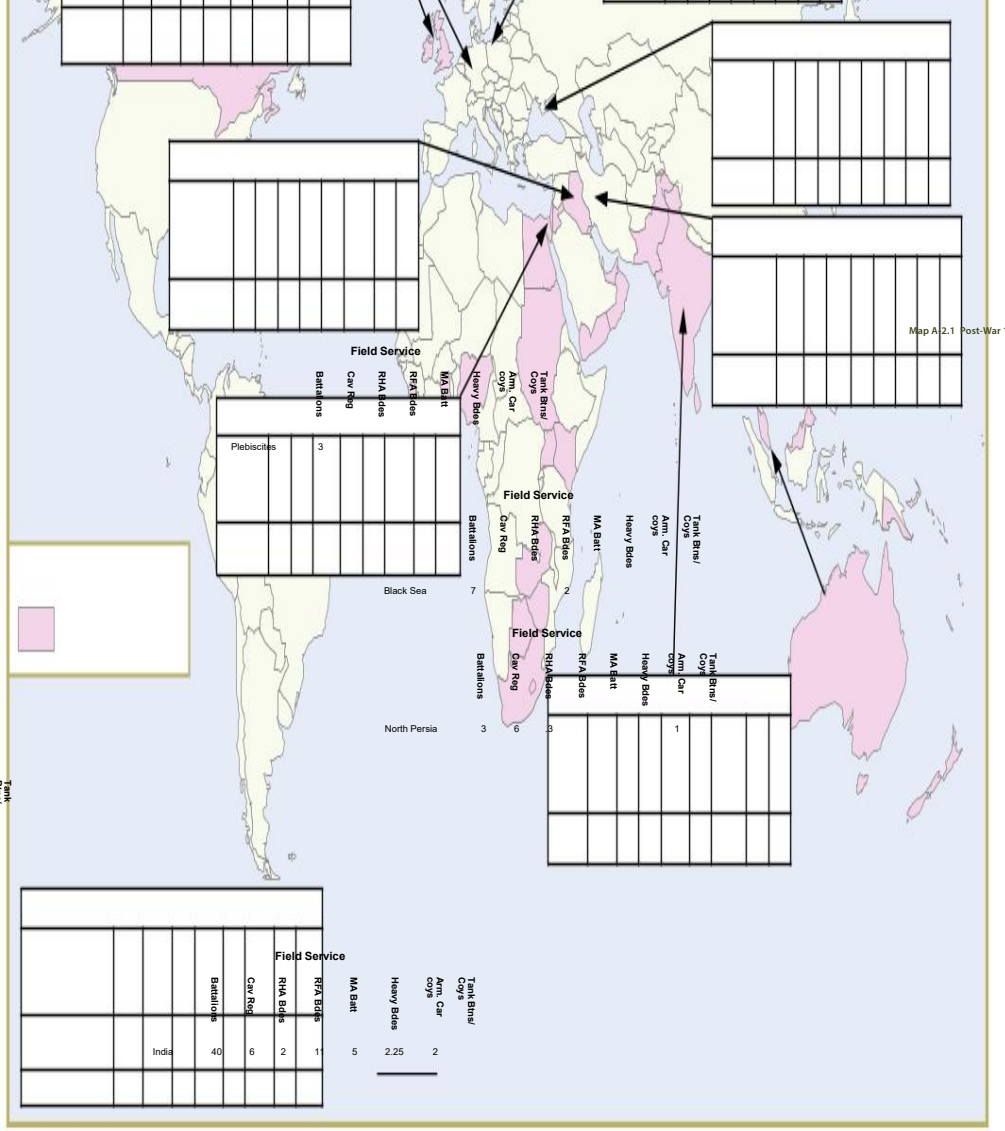
HENRY WILSON, Field-Marshal,
Chief of the Imperial General Staff.
9th June, 1920.

Summary of British Troops

	Existing									Allowed for in Foregoing Memorandum									Proposed for Trooping Season 1921-1922							
	Battalions	Cavalry Regiments	Brigades, R.H.A (3 Batteries)	Brigades, R.F.A. (4 Batteries)	Batteries, M.A	Bdes., Heavy Art (4 Batteries)	Armoured Cars Companies		Tank Battalions or Companies	Battalions	Cavalry Regiments	Brigades, R.H.A (3 Batteries)	Brigades, R.F.A. (4 Batteries)	Batteries, M.A	Bdes., Heavy Art (4 Batteries)	Armoured Cars Companies	Tank Battalions or Companies		Battalions	Cavalry Regiments	Brigades, R.H.A (3 Batteries)	Brigades, R.F.A. (4 Batteries)	Batteries, M.A	Bdes., Heavy Art (4 Batteries)	Armoured Cars Companies	Tank Battalions or Companies
India	40	6	2	11	5	2¾	2			40	6	2	11	6	2	3			45	8	2	11	(?) 6	2¾	(?) 3	
Mesopotamia	5	2		2	2	¼	2			7	2	⅓	2	2	¾	3			5	1	⅓	1	1	¼	2	
North Persia	3						1			1									#3				1		1	
Egypt	6	1	⅓							7	1	⅓	¾		¼	2			6	1	⅓				2	
Palestine	3	3	⅓	2	1		2			3	3	⅓	1 ¾	1	¼				3	3	⅓	1	1	¼	2	
Overseas defended ports	7					¾				7		⅓			¼				8					¾		
Plebiscite	3					¼				3																
Black Sea	7			2		¾				3			2						3			1				
Total of Field Service	74	12	3	17	8	4	7			72	12	3	17	9	4	7			73	13	3	14	9	4	10	
Rhine	7	1		1		¼			1 Co	7	1		1						7	1		1		¾		1 Co
Ireland	30	7		6		2	1			Incl with GB figure below	Incl with GB figure below	Incl with GB figure below	Incl with GB figure below	Incl with GB figure below	Incl with GB figure below	Incl with GB figure below	1 Co 2(		38	7		6		2	1	
Great Britain	47	11	2	13	8	4	1		2	79	18	2	19	8	6	1			40+	10	2	15	12	3¾	1	*2
Total of Home Service	84	19	2	20	8	6 ¼	2		2 Bns 1 Co	86	19	2	20	8	6	1	2 Bns 1 Co		85+	18	2	22	12	6	2	*2 Bns 1 Co
Grand Total	158	31	5	37	16	10 ¼	9		2 Bns 1 Co	158	31	5	37	17	10	8	2 Bns 1 Co		158	31	5	36	21	10	12	*2 Bns 2 Cos

* To be expanded as soon as possible to four battalions

\+ If Persia is to be evacuated these three battalions might be added to the general reserve



Map A-2.1 Post-War 1920

Home Service

	Battalions	Cav Reg	RHA Bdes	RFA Bdes	MA Batt	Heavy Bdes	Arm. Car coys	Tank Btns/ Coys
Great Britain	47	11	2	13	8	4	1	2
Ireland	30	7		6		2	1	
Rhine	7	1		1		.25		1 coy
Totals	**84**	**19**	**2**	**20**	**8**	**6.25**	**2**	**2 Btns 1 Coy**

Field Service

	Battalions	Cav Reg	RHA Bdes	RFA Bdes	MA Batt	Heavy Bdes	Arm. Car coys	Tank Btns/ Coys
Mesopotamia	5	2		2	2	.25	2	

Field Service

	Battalions	Cav Reg	RHA Bdes	RFA Bdes	MA Batt	Heavy Bdes	Arm. Car coys	Tank Btns/ Coys
Egypt	6	1	.3					
Palestine	3	3	.3	2	1	.25	2	

Field Service

	Battalions	Cav Reg	RHA Bdes	RFA Bdes	MA Batt	Heavy Bdes	Arm. Car coys	Tank Btns/ Coys
India	40	6	2	11	5	2.25	2	

Field Service

	Battalions	Cav Reg	RHA Bdes	RFA Bdes	MA Batt	Heavy Bdes	Arm. Car coys	Tank Btns/ Coys
Overseas defended ports	7					.75		
Field Service Totals	**74**	**12**	**3**	**17**	**8**	**4**	**7**	

Field Service

	Battalions	Cav Reg	RHA Bdes	RFA Bdes	MA Batt	Heavy Bdes	Arm. Car coys	Tank Btns/ Coys
Plebiscites	3							

Field Service

	Battalions	Cav Reg	RHA Bdes	RFA Bdes	MA Batt	Heavy Bdes	Arm. Car coys	Tank Btns/ Coys
Black Sea	7			2				

Field Service

	Battalions	Cav Reg	RHA Bdes	RFA Bdes	MA Batt	Heavy Bdes	Arm. Car coys	Tank Btns/ Coys
North Persia	3	6	3				1	

Key

British Empire or Protectorate

For tables in full, see preceding pages.

Please note: This map is approximate, for indicative purposes only. This is derived from a modern map and not all boundaries are necessarily correct as 1914-18 or as in the aftermath of the war. Not to scale.

Appendix 3 - Timeline of Events

Timeline 1914

Front	January 1914	February 1914	March 1914	April 1914	May 1914	June 1914	July 1914	August 1914	September 1914	October 1914	November 1914	December 1914
Home							Churchill orders the Fleet to stay concentrated in the Solent.	Ultimatum to Germany expires, cabinet order the BEF to France. Kitchener issued call for volunteers.	Irish Home Bill suspended for duration of war.	Admiral Fisher takes over as First Sea Lord.	Asquith establishes a War Council (November 1914-May 1915), co-existed with the full Cabinet. War declared on Ottoman Empire.	High Seas Fleet shells Scarborough, Hartlepool, West Hartlepool, and Whitby. The attack resulted in 137 deaths, mainly civilian.
Western Front								Germany declares war on France, and invades Belgium. Battle of Mons.	Battles of the Marne, First Battle of the Aisne, Race to the Sea.	Germans take Antwerp. First Ypres 18 Oct- 12 Nov.	The trench system established.	British casualties exceed strength of BEF deployed in Aug.
War at Sea								Britain severs Germany-USA sea telegraph cable. Battle of Heligoland Bight.	German commerce raiders *Emden*, *Koenigsberg* and *Dresden* attack British shipping in colonies.	Turkey closes Black Sea Straits to Allies.	Battle of Coronel. *Emden* sunk by HMAS *Sydney*. Jellicoe withdraws the Grand Fleet to northern waters.	Battle of the Falkland Islands.
Eastern Front							Russia mobilises.	Austria-Hungary declares war on Russia. France and Britain declare war on A-H. Battles of Gumbinnen and Tannenberg.	First Battle of the Masurian Lakes. Russian operations in E. Galicia. Conrad orders Austrian withdrawal.	Austro-German invasion of Russian Poland. Second Russian siege of Przmysl.	Hindenburg appointed CinC Eastern Front. Second Russian siege of Przmysl.	Battles of Limanowa. Aust-German armies estb a defensive line Vistula to Tarnow and the line of the Carpathians.
Ireland							Buckingham Palace conference on the Irish Question. Bachelor's Walk shootings.	The ban on the importation of guns into Ireland removed.	Irish Home Bill suspended for duration of war.			
The Balkans						Arch Duke Ferdinand assassinated.	Serbia mobilises. Austria declares war on Serbia.	Austrian invasion of Serbia.	Serbian victory on the Drina. Austrians invade again and capture Belgrade.	Serbs retake Belgrade.		
Egypt / Palestine								Egypt made a protectorate.		Ottoman declaration of Jihad against the British Empire.		Garrison reinforced by ANZAC and two Indian divisions.
Mesopotamia											Landings at Fao; Basra secured; Repulse of Ottoman force.	Persian government declares support for Germany: Russian forces march on Teheran and oust the government.
Africa								12th August Regimental Sergeant Major Alhaji Grunshi of the West African Frontier Force fired the first British rifle shot of the war.	South African forces destroyed by the Germans at Sandfontein.	Maritz Rebellion or the Boer Revolt breaks out, largely defeated within weeks.	General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck repulses a British amphibious attempt to take the port of Tanga.	
India, NW Frontier												Operations in the Tochi

Timeline 1915

Front	January 1915	February 1915	March 1915	April 1915	May 1915	June 1915	July 1915	August 1915	September 1915	October 1915	November 1915	December 1915
Home	East coast towns bombed by Zeppelins.	Engineering strike on Clydeside, rent strike in Glasgow.			"Shell scandal" exposed. Ministry of Munitions established. Fisher resigns. Asquith forms coalition. Zeppelin raid on London. Dardanelles Committee (May 1915-November 1915), coexists with full Cabinet.	War Loans Act. End of South Wales coal strike.				Introduction of the Derby scheme. Last attempt to make voluntary recruiting work.	Churchill resigns from government. War Committee (November 1915-December 1916), coexists with full Cabinet.	Cabinet agrees to conscription. Two million extra women have joined the work force.
Western Front			British advance at Neuve Chapelle makes little progress.	2nd Ypres, Germans use gas for first time.	Allied Spring Offensive begins (including Aubers Ridge and Festubert). 2nd Ypres ends.	18 June - 2nd Battle of Artois ends.	First Chantilly Conference: agrees on principles of co-ordination.	France strips heavy artillery from fortresses for use on Western Front.	25 Sep - 15 Oct - Battle of Loos.			Haig replaces French as CinC. Robertson appointed CIGS. Second Chantilly Conference: commits Allies to co-ordinated offensives in summer of 1916.
War at Sea	The Battle of Dogger Bank.	Germany declares unrestricted submarine warfare.	18 March, Allied naval assault on Dardanelles Straits fails.		U Boat sinks the *Lusitania*.		SMS *Konigsberg* sunk at Battle of Rufiji Delta, E Africa.					
Eastern Front	Germany uses poison gas for first time at Bolimow.	2nd Battle of the Masurian Lakes.	Przemsyl falls to Russians.		German High Command moves from Luxembourg to Silesia. Gorlice Tarnow offensive.	Central powers retake Przemsyl. Russia evacuates Austrian Galicia. Russian losses now 3.3m.	The triple Offensive and the 'Great Retreat' from Poland.	Austrian Black Yellow Offensive.	Tsar Nicholas II takes over as CinC.	German HQ moves East to Kovno.		
Ireland								100 army rifles stolen in Dublin.				
NE Italy					Italy declares war on Austria.	1st Battle of the Isonzo begins.	1st Battle of the Isonzo ends. 2nd Battle of the Isonzo begins.	2nd Battle of the Isonzo ends. Italy declares war on Turkey.		3rd Battle of the Isonzo begins. Italy declares war on Bulgaria.	3rd Battle of the Isonzo ends. 4th Battle of the Isonzo begins.	4th Battle of the Isonzo ends.
The Balkans	Venizelos (Greek PM) proposes Allied landing in Greece. French support. Diplomatic effort to bring Bulgaria into the war on the Allied side.	Allies postpone Greek landing in favour of Gallipoli.							Bulgarians enter the war on the side of the Central Powers. Greek army mobilises. Britain and France agree to send troops to Greece.	British (10th (Irish) Division) and French forces land at Salonika. German, Austrian armies followed by Bulgaria invade Serbia, capture Belgrade.	French advance north from Salonika to Serbia clash with Bulgarian 2nd Army. Serbian army begins 'The Great Retreat'. By mid Nov, 10th Div in line between Lake Doiran and Kosturino.	Allied conference at Chantilly - to persist with Salonika Expedition. 10th (Irish) Division swept off the Kosturino Ridge. All British and French troops back on Greek soil by 14 December and retreating towards Salonika. Construction of defences around Salonika started by Allied forces.
Egypt / Palestine		Ottoman forces cross Sinai and attack the Suez Canal, repulsed. Senussi of Libya receive training cadres from Ottoman army.	Egypt denuded of troops for Gallipoli.						German U-boats attack British shipping off Egypt-Libya coast.		Senussi launch raids on Western border of Egypt: British counter-attacks successful.	

Front	January 1915	February 1915	March 1915		April 1915	May 1915	June 1915	July 1915		August 1915	September 1915	October 1915	November 1915	December 1915
Galipolli	War Cabinet agree to launch a naval assault on the Dardanelles.		18 Mar, Allied naval assault on Dardanelles Straits fails.		25 Apr, Allies land at Gallipoli. First Battle of Krithia.	2nd Battle of Krithia.	3rd Battle of Krithia. Five more British divisions ordered to Gallipoli.			August offensive to take Chunuk Bair and Sari Bair fails. Suvla Bay operations fail.		Hamilton dismissed, Munro replaces him as CinC Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.		ANZAC and Suvla Bay forces successfully evacuated.
Mesopotamia	Battle of Jarrab: Ibn Saud's pro-British Arab irregulars defeat Ibn Rashid pro-Ottoman forces, securing southern Arabia.	German military envoys attempt to raise Persian and Arab clans against British presence.			Battle of Shaiba.	Ottoman offensive at Van (Caucasus) checked by Russian army.	Ottoman offensive towards Aden.	British counter-offensive halts attack on Aden at Lahej.					The Attack on Ctesiphon, withdrawal to Kut.	Russians secure northern Persia and defeat pro-German government forces.
Africa					Battle of Garua (German Cameroons). Germans have been forced from the south of German SW Africa.	Botha captures Windhoek. In E Africa German forces total 3,300 Germans and 15,000 Askaris. British have 4,300 men of the KAR.	SW Africa - Germans surrender.	SMS *Konigsberg* sunk at Battle of Rufiji Delta, E Africa.					German advance to take Mombasa-Uganda railway stopped by Empire forces, now including Indian Army brigade. British forces defeated at Tanga.	
India and NW Frontier	Indian government agrees to send 32 British inf bns, 2 Indian inf Bns to Europe, replaced by 43 TA inf Bns from UK.	Operations against the Mohmands, Bunerwals and Swatis.	Operations against the Mohmands, Bunerwals and Swatis.		Operations against the Mohmands, Bunerwals and Swatis.	Operations against the Mohmands, Bunerwals and Swatis.	Operations against the Mohmands, Bunerwals and Swatis.	Operations against the Mohmands, Bunerwals and Swatis.		Operations against the Mohmands, Bunerwals and Swatis.	Operations against the Mohmands, Bunerwals and Swatis.	Operations against the Mohmands, Bunerwals and Swatis.	Operations against the Mohmands, Bunerwals and Swatis.	Operations against the Mohmands, Bunerwals and Swatis.

Timeline 1916

Front	January 1916	February 1916	March 1916		April 1916	May 1916	June 1916	July 1916		August 1916	September 1916	October 1916	November 1916	December 1916
Home		First Military Service Act conscripts unmarried men.	Clydeside munitions workers strike.		German ships bombard Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth in support of Easter Rebellion.	British Summer Time introduced. Second Military Service act conscripts married men.	Kitchener dies when HMS *Hampshire* strikes mine.	Lloyd George becomes SofS for War.		East coast bombarded.		Govt plans to control wheat supplies.	Troops occupy south Wales coalfields.	Asquith resigns, Lloyd George forms coalition. The War Loan Act. Lloyd George replaced full Cabinet with a small War Cabinet, which also superseded the War Committee (until November 1919.
Western Front		German assault on Verdun begins. Petain takes command Verdun.				Nivelle takes over from Petain.	Battle of the Somme.	Battle of the Somme. German Verdun offensive halted because of the Somme.		Battle of the Somme. Falkenhayn dismissed.	Battle of the Somme. Tanks used for first time by British at Fleurs-Courcelette. Construction of Hindenburg Line begins.	Battle of the Somme. Fort Douaumont retaken.	Battle of the Somme ends. Chantilly Conference.	Nivelle replaces Joffre as French CinC Western Front. Verdun ends.
War at Sea	Reinhard Scheer takes over High Seas Fleet.					Battle of Jutland - 31 May-1 June.								
Eastern Front	Kuropatkin takes over as CinC Northern Front.		Russian Lake Naroch offensive.		Brusilov takes over as CinC Southern Front.	The Brusilov Offensive -17 Oct.		The Ukraine Offensive. Hindenburg and Ludendorff assume command of Austro-German forces.		Russians fail to capture Kovel rail junction. Romania declares war on Central Powers.	Mackensen's Danube Army invades Romania.	Romanian forces abandon Transylvania.	Mackensen crosses the Danube.	Mackensen takes Bucharest, Romania agrees to temporary armistice.
Ireland					Easter Rebellion.									
NE Italy			5th Battle of the Isonzo.			Austrian Trentino Offensive begins.	Austrian Trentino Offensive halted.			6th Battle of the Isonzo (Battle of Gorizia). Italy declares war on Germany.	7th Battle of the Isonzo.	8th Battle of the Isonzo.	9th Battle of the Isonzo.	
The Balkans	French replenish Serbian army on Corfu. General Sarrail appointed GOC Allied Forces in the Balkans.		80,000 Serbian soldiers arrive in Salonika. The bulk of the 120,000 men of the Serbian Army arrived during May. The first Allied troops move north from Salonika.		British forces move north out of the 'The Birdcage'.	. Milne replaces Mahon as GOC BSF.	'State of Siege' declared in Salonika.			Buulgarian 1st and 2nd Armies cross into Greece. Battle of Florina. Italian 35th Division arrives at Salonika. Russian 2nd Brigade arrives at Salonika.	The Monastir Offensive.	The Monastir Offensive. Venizelos forms provisional (pro-Allied) Greek govt. Russian 4th Brigade arrives at Salonika.	The Monastir Offensive. Allied forces capture the city of Monastir.	The Monastir Offensive.
Egypt / Palestine	Murray (ex-CIGS) takes over from Maxwell.	Ja'far captured at Agagiya.	First of ten divisions sent on to France.		Murray pushes defensive line into the Sinai. Defeats Ottoman attack at Qatiya.		Arab Revolt begins at Mecca.			Ottoman assault on British positions at Romani defeated.				Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) takes El Arish. Aus/NZ Division captures Magdhaba.
Gallipoli	Final evacuation from Helles - end of campaign.													
Mesopotamia	The Battle of Sheikh Sa'ad (to relieve Kut). Battle of the Wadi. Battle of the Hanna.	Ottomans defeated at Erzurum (Caucasus).	Battle of Dujaila: attempt to relieve Kut.		Capitulation at Kut al Amara.					Maude takes over as GOC Mesopotamia Force.				Maude Tigris offensive to take Baghdad opens. Second Battle of Kut
Africa		Cameroons - German forces move to neutral country, Mora surrenders, campaign over.	British forces open offensive against German East Africa.			Anglo-Egyptian force defeats Jihadist Ali Dinar in Darfur, Sudan.					Dar es Salam and Central Railway now under British control.			German forces driven south of the Rufiji River. British forces exhausted.

Timeline 1917

Front	January 1917	February 1917	March 1917		April 1917	May 1917	June 1917	July 1917		August 1917	September 1917	October 1917	November 1917	December 1917
Home		The Corn Production Act.	First meeting ot the Imperial War Cabinet.		Worst month for shipping losses. USA declares war on Germany.	Convoy system introduced. Series of major strikes in engineering industry.	Royal Family adopts the name Windsor.	Churchill appointed minister of munitions. Government introduced bread subsidy.					Rapallo Conference, Allies establish Supreme War Council.	USA declares war on Austria-Hungary.
Western Front		Portuguese force joins Allies. German Operation Alberich.	German Operation Alberich.		Battle of Arras (and Vimy Ridge). 2nd Battle of the Aisne (Nivelle Offensive). French army mutinies.	Battle of Arras (and Vimy Ridge). 2nd Battle of the Aisne (Nivelle Offensive). French army mutinies. Nivelle replaced by Petain.	French army mutinies. Battle of Messines.	Germans use mustard gas. 3rd Battle of Ypres.		3rd Battle of Ypres. French army opens Second Offensive Battle of Verdun, ends 26 Aug.	3rd Battle of Ypres. British mutiny at Etaples.	3rd Battle of Ypres. Battle of Malmaison.	3rd Battle of Ypres. Battle of Cambrai.	Paris Conference.
War at Sea	Germans resume unrestricted submarine warfare.					Battle of the Otranto Straits.								
Eastern Front	Von Straussenberg replaces Conrad.	February Revolution in Russia.				Kerensky appointed war minister.		Kerensky (2nd Brusilov Offensive). Successful German counter-offensive.		Battles of Marasesti and Focsani.	Germans Capture Riga.	Russian October Revolution.		All fighting suspended. Romanians sign a ceae-fire.
Ireland							Nationalist riots in Dublin. Amnesty for those arrested during Easter Uprising.							
NE Italy					10 British Artillery batteries moved from Aldershot to Italy.	10th Battle of the Izonso begins.	10th Battle of the Isonzo ends.			11th Battle of the Isonzo.		12th Battle of the Isonzo (Battle of Caporetto) begins. Overwhelming Austro-German success.	12th Battle of the Isonzo (Battle of Caporetto) halted. Italian retreat to the Piave. Cadorna dismissed and replaced by Diaz. Five British divisions moved from the Western Front to Italy.	
The Balkans			Allied Lake Prespa Offensive.		First Battle of Doiran (24 Apr to 9 May).	Sarrail's offensive W of Vardar. Russian contingents mutiny in Salonika.	Abdication of King Constantine, Greece declares war on Central Powers.			Great fire in Salonika.				General Sarrail replaced as Allied C-in-C
Egypt / Palestine	EEF captures Rafa.	Siwa recaptured.	1st Battle of Gaza.		2nd Battle of Gaza - fails. Last Senussi raid on Western Egypt		Murray replaced by Allenby.	Aqaba captured by Arab army.				3rd Battle of Gaza.	3rd Battle of Gaza - Beersheba taken.	Allenby enters Jerusalem.
Mesopotamia			Maude secures Baghdad. Fallujah seized.		Samarrah seized - Maude offensive halted.			Assault on Ramadi fails.			Ramadi taken, Tikrit secured.			
Africa								Major offensive operations resume in E Africa.			Battle of Mahindi.		von Lettow-Vorbeck's forces withdraw into Portuguese E Africa.	

Timeline 1918

Front	January 1918	February 1918	March 1918	April 1918	May 1918	June 1918	July 1918	August 1918	September 1918	October 1918	November 1918	December 1918
Home	Carson resigns from war cabinet.	Lloyd George forces resignation of Robertson as CIGS.	Lloyd George takes personal control of War Office.	Cabinet accepts Foch as CinC of Allied armies. Lord Milner becomes SofS for War.	The Times publishes the "Maurice Letter", debate in Commons, Liberal party splits. Nicaragua declares war on Central Powers.	Vote extended to all men over 21 and married women over 30.	Ration books issued for meat and dairy products.	HAL Fisher introduces act for national education. School leaving age raised to 14.		Parliament votes in favour of women MPs.	Labour party votes to leave coalition.	The 'Khaki' Election.
Western Front	Ludendorff decides on his March offensive.		German offensive against British 5th Army - Op Michael. The 'Kaiserschlacht' stalls.	Second German offensive - Op Georgette, Battle of the Lys.	Ludendorff's third offensive - Third Battle of the Aisne. US first offensive of the war at Catigny.	US army in France reaches 1m. Battle of Belleau Wood.	2nd Battle of the Marne. Ludendorff tells Kaiser that the offensives have failed. Battle of Le Hamel.	Battle of Amiens, the start of 100 days. 'The Black Day of the German Army'. Canadians capture Peronne.	Allied Meuse and Argonne offensives. Allies cross the St Quentin Canal.	Canadians breach the Hindenburg Line and take Cambrai. Allied Courtrai and Selle offensives.	Allied Sambre offensive. 11 November - The Armistice.	2nd Army under Plumer occupy the Cologne Bridgehead.
Russia			Brest-Litovsk Treaty ends war with Russia.	German Army of 55,000 men sent to Finland to support the Finns against Bolshevist rule.	RN North Russia Squadron operating in Murmansk area.	Allied war council sanctions 'Murmansk Force'. Dunsterforce reaches Enzeli, blocked by Bolshevists, moves by ship to Baku.	Czech Legion seizes Yekaterinburg and parts of Trans-Siberian railway. 'Murmansk Force' seizes Archangel from Bolshevists. The Tsar and his family were executed at Yekaterinburg by Bolsheviks on the orders of the Ural Regional Soviet.	British infantry sent to Vladivostok to assist Czechs. Turks over-run Wolf's Gate, Dunsterforce withdraws from Baku.		Allied columns push inland from Archangel.	Bitter fighting on the Dvina river - Bolsheviks led personally by Lenin.	US and French troops seize Kadish. Large military mission sent to General Denikin in S Russia, British tanks decisive in Battle of Tsaritsyn.
War at Sea				Two British attempts to block Zeebrugge and Ostend fail. Last sortie of the High Seas Fleet.			Northern Barrage built from Orkneys to Norway.			Scheer recalls all U-Boats to port. High Seas Fleet mutinies.	High Seas Fleet sails to Scapa Flow - later scuttled.	
Ireland				Conscription extended to Ireland but not applied.		Govt abandons conscription in Ireland and postpones Home Rule. Flu breaks out.						
NE Iltaly			Two British divisions moved from Italy back to the Western Front.			Battle of the Piave. Austrian Offensive halted.				Battle of Vittorio Veneto begins.	Battle of Vittorio Veneto ends. Austrian forces surrender.	
Austria / Hungary and The Balkans		Austrian naval mutiny at Kotor in the Adriatic.				12 British battalions leave Macedonia for the Western Front. General Guillaumat replaced as Allied C-in-C at Salonika by General Franchet d'Esperey.	Nine Greek divisions join the Allied armies in N Greece.		The Allied Vardar offensive (18-19 Sept). Second Battle of Doiran. Bulgaria surrenders.	Serbian army re-occupies Belgrade. Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Croatia proclaim independence. Belgrade. .and Croatia proclaim independence.	Allied troops reach the Danube as Austria -Hungary forces capitulate.	Kingdom of Serbs Croats and Slovenes proclaimed.
Egypt / Palestine		Falkenhayn replaced by Liman von Sanders.	Allenby sends to France two divisions and the infantry strength of three more, in all nearly 60,000 men.	The railway line on either side of Ma'an destroyed over a long stretch by Arab army with Lawrence.	Ottoman garrison at Medina isolated.				Battle of Megiddo. Dera, captured by Feisal and Lawrence.	Aleppo captured. Damascus captured by Australians and Beirut by 7th Indian Division. 30 October - Mudros armistice brings Ottoman war to an end.	Constantinople occupied by Allies. 28 British Division occupies the Dardanelles forts.	British occupy the district of Pera-Galata.
Mesopotamia	Dunsterforce sets out from Baghdad for the Caucasus.		Operations resume, 15th Indian Division takes Hit.				North Persia Force (Dunsterforce) moves to the Caspian.	Battle of Baku.	British contingent evacuates Baku.	British secure Mosul.		
Africa								von Lettow-Vorbeck begins a long march north around the top of Lake Nyasa into northern Rhodesia.			25 November von Lettow-Vorbeck surrenders his force art Abercorn.	

Timeline 1919

Front	January 1919	February 1919	March 1919		April 1919	May 1919	June 1919	July 1919		August 1919	September 1919	October 1919	November 1919	December 1919
Home		Mass rally in Glasgow broken up by police, and troops and tanks were deployed on Clydeside.	British Govt presses Allies to withdraw from Russia. Kinmel Park Riots by Canadian troops, 5 killed.				Treaty of Versailles signed. Alcock and Brown fly across the Atlantic. Scuttling of High Seas Fleet at Scapa Flow.			10 Year Rule on defence spending.	Forestry Commission set up.		First Remembrance Day Ceremony. War Cabinet closed. Government reverted to the full peacetime Cabinet.	Lady Astor becomes the first woman to take her seat in parliament. Meat rationing ends.
Western Europe (including the German Borderlands)			2nd British Army redesignated the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR). Plumer hands over command to Robertson (CIGS from December 1915 to February 1918).				Signature of Treaty of Versailles and of Rhineland Agreement (28 June).							
North Russia	Bolsheviks launch a general offensive to drive the Allies out of Archangel.	Disaffection within Allied units.			White Russians defending Tulgas mutiny, town lost. Ironside told to withdraw before next winter.	Tulgas recaptured.	British North Russia Relief Force arrives at Archangel to assist in withdrawal.	Sloops HMS *Gentian* and HMS *Myrtle* sunk by mines in the Gulf of Finland while assisting Estonia against the Bolsheviks.		Ironside conducts successful offensive at Gorodok-Seltsoe. Further successful major action at Emtsa.	Successes enable Allies to withdraw from Archangel.	Murmansk evacuated.		
Ireland	Sinn Fein sets up its own parliament, the 'Dáil Eireann', in Dublin.	Éamon de Valera and two other prisoners escape from Lincoln Prison.									First British soldier killed in Co Cork. British government declares Sinn Fein's 'Dáil Eireann' (parliament) illegal.			By end of year 15 RIC men murdered.
The Caucasus, Turkey and South Russia	27th Division sets up HQ at Tiflis, Georgia. Establishes strongpoints on Trans-Caucasia Railway.	Allied fleet sails into the Bosphorus.	27,419 British soldiers in Turkey, supported by twenty-seven batteries of artillery and sixty ships of the Mediterranean Fleet.			Greek troops occupy Smyrna (Izmir). Georgia and Azerbaijan now firmly under British control. 47 Sqn RAF arrives to support Denikin in S Russia.							White Russians fail against Bolsheviks, Cossacks go home, volunteers desert.	French land troops in Ukraine and Crimea.
Mesopotamia Iraq, Egypt and Palestine	Iraq occupied as an enemy territory.		Cairo riots; Allenby appointed High Commissioner in Egypt.				Some unrest by Kurds throughout the year.							
India and the North West Frontier					Amritsar Massacre.	3rd Afghan War.				Treaty of Rawalpindi ends 3rd Afghan War.				The Government of India Act further angers Indians already disillusioned by the Rowlatt Act and the Amritsar Massacre.

Timeline 1920

Front	January 1920	February 1920	March 1920		April 1920	May 1920	June 1920	July 1920		August 1920	September 1920	October 1920	November 1920	December 1920
Home	Women at Oxford University are allowed to receive degrees.	Churchill announces that conscripts will be replaced by a volunteer army of 220,000 men.			Britain is given mandates for Mesopotamia and Palestine.	Field Service Regulations Vol 2 Operations - published - month not known.	King George V opens the Imperial War Museum at The Crystal Palace.	The first women jury members in England are empanelled at Bristol Quarter Sessions.		The Communist Party of Great Britain meets for first time.		Compulsory hand signals are to be introduced for all drivers.	King George V unveils the Cenotaph; The Unknown Warrior is buried.	The Government of Ireland Act received Royal assent, creating the provinces of Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland, each with its own parliament.
Western Europe and German Borderlands	Treaty of Versailles ratified. 3rd Bn R Fus deploys for 12 months to Danzig to oversee free status.	British inf Bn deploys to support Schleswig plebiscite - 75% for union with Denmark.	Second plebiscite in Flensburg area - 80% favoured remaining part of Germany.				Allied troops withdraw from northern Schleswig.	British inf Bn deploys to support plebiscite in Allenstein and Marienwerder, majority vote to remain in Germany.		Allied troops withdraw from Allenstein and Marienwerder.		Two BAOR Bns return to UK for MACP tasks during miners' strike.		Allied trops withdraw from Danzig.
Ireland	Many RIC barracks attacked.		St Patrick's Day - two unarmed policemen murdered by IRA leaving church. Thomas Mac Curtain, Lord Mayor of Cork and a Sinn Féin member, shot dead.		Many abandoned RIC barracks destroyed. Hunger strike at Mountjoy Jail and Wormwood Scrubs.	Dock and transport workers strike, refuse to handle military materiel.	Summer Assizes fail, jurors refuse to participate.	Comd 6th Bde and two Lt Cols captured by IRA in Cork. 4 more battalions arrive - total now 34 Bns. Fourteen die and 100 are injured in fierce rioting in Belfast.		Restoration of Order Act. Eleven die and forty are injured in street battles in Belfast.	Kevin Barry arrested after murder of 3 soldiers in Dublin. 6 RIC killed in ambush in Co Clare, soldiers and police take revenge.	McSwiney dies after hunger strike in Brixton Prison. 5 RIC officers murdered at Tralee, RIC burn houses in Tralee.	Kevin Barry hanged for murder. Bloody Sunday, IRA murders 12 army officers, Later 10 killed by RIC at Croke Park. 17 ADRIC men murdered in Kilmichael Ambush led by Tom Barry.	Martial law proclaimed in Counties Cork, Kerry, Limerick, and Tipperary. Later extended to Counties Clare, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford.
The Caucasus, South Russia and Turkey	Ottoman parliament in Constantinople refuses to recognise the occupation. 14th Indian Division secures Baku oilfields.	Denikin withdraws to Crimea. Milne appointed as C-in-C Allied Occupation Forces Black Sea.	Allies impose martial law in Constantinople. Parliament dissolved.		Turkish advance halted by 242 Inf Bde at Bilejik Pass.		British Military Mission in S Russia ceases.	20th Hussars charged Turkish positions in July near the village of Gebze and successfully routed them. Last regimental cavalry charge by British army.		Treaty of Sevres between Turkey and the Allies signed.				
Mesopotamia Iraq, Egypt and Palestine	British political officer kidnapped at Deir-ez-Zor.		Faisal declared King of Syria.		Britain assigned mandate over Palestine; France assigned mandates over Syria and Lebanon.	Unrest in Karbala, Najaf and Nasiriyah, organised by Ahd al-Iraqi.	Iraqi gendarmes mutiny and kill their British CO. Tribesmen of the Shammar clan join in, revolt spreads, Mosul cut off. Revolt swiftly suppressed.	Revolt starts again, along the Euphrates and at Hillah -both suppressed. Rumaitha revolts, upto 5,000 rebels attack relief column. Revolt widens. The destruction of the Manchester Regt Column. Samuel becomes High Commissioner in Palestine; Faisal expelled by French.		51 Bde withdraws from Rumaitha, first reinforcements arrive from India. Order in central area imposed through fortified control points. More trouble in Upper Euphrates and Diyala River.	Small garrisons destroyed N of Baghdad, 51 Bde restore order. Shortage of troops to reinforce leads to use of air power. Control of Huseiniyah Canal regained.	Besieged battalion at Samawah relieved by 51 Bde. Kufah and Karballah surrender to British. Revolt ends.		France and Britain agree Syria-Palestine boundary.

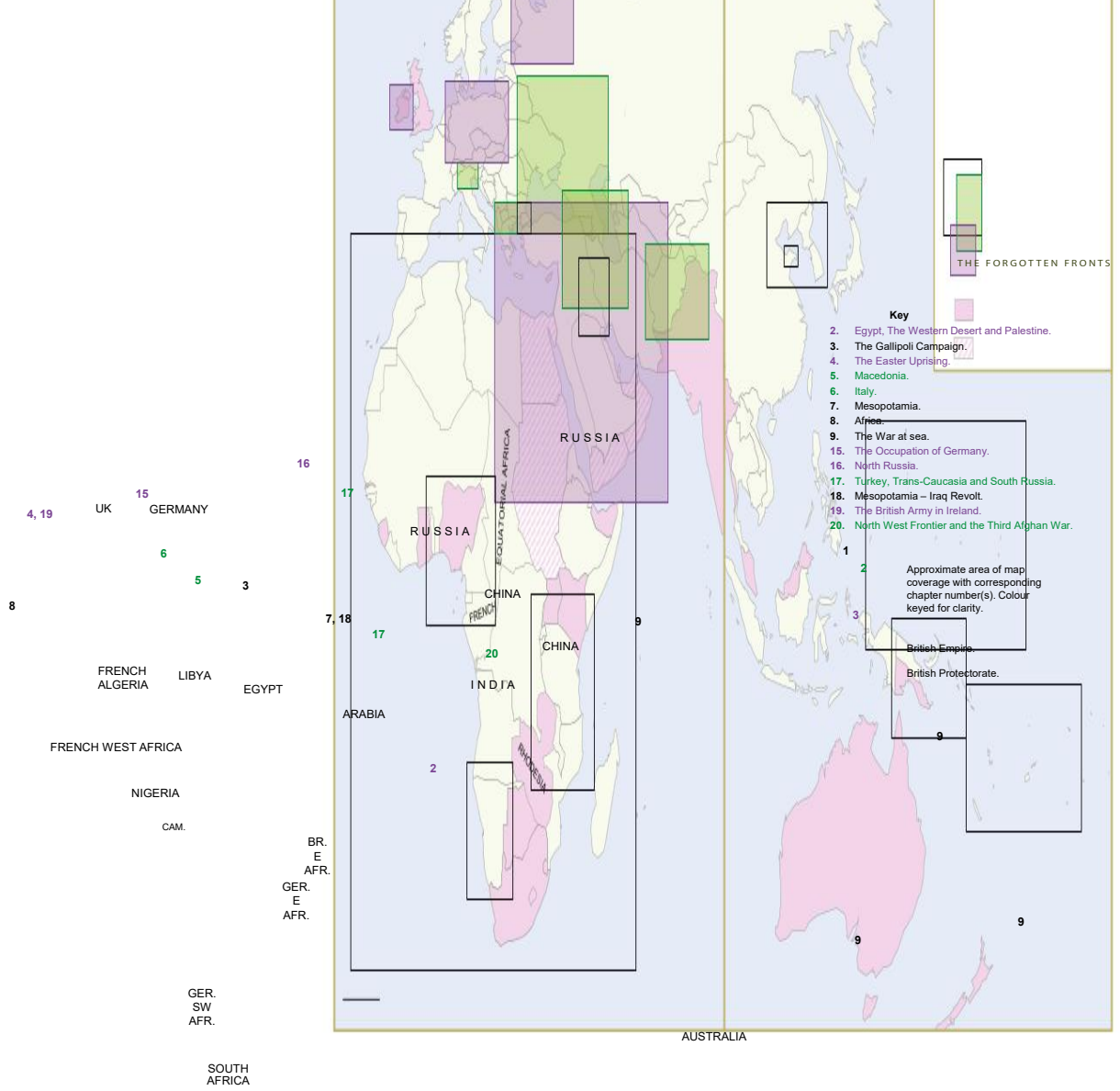
Timeline 1921

Front	January 1921	February 1921	March 1921		April 1921	May 1921	June 1921	July 1921		August 1921	September 1921	October 1921	November 1921	December 1921
Home	Unemployment stands at 927,000 . Wartime industrial contracts come to an end.	Churchill appointed Colonial Secretary.	Queen Mary becomes the first woman to be awarded an honorary degree by Oxford University.		Miners strike, coal rationing begins.	The British Legion is founded.	Unemployment reaches 2.2m, miners' strike ends.	Unemployment reaches a post-war high of 2.5 million.		British mandate of Mesopotamia becomes the Kingdom of Iraq. R38 class airship ZR-2 explodes on her fourth test flight.		The first women are admitted to study for full academic degrees in the University of Cambridge, (University College London had admitted women to degrees from 1878).		Anglo-Irish Peace Treaty is signed, resulting in partition of the island.
Western Europe and German Borderlands			4 BAOR Bns deploy to Silesia to support plebiscite. More deploy to French occupied Dusseldorf in dispute over reparations.		4 BAOR Bns return to UK on MACP tasks during industrial unrest. All British troops in Upper Silesia return to Rhineland.	6 British battalions (incl two from UK) ordered to reinforce Franco-Italian contingent in Upper Silesia (widespread disorder). No British Bns remaining in Rhineland; French Army assumes responsibility for some British commitments.					Two further British battalions deploy from UK to Upper Silesia (bringing total there from six to eight).	Council of League of Nations recommendations on demarcation of German/Polish frontier in Upper Silesia and these accepted by allied powers. Upper Silesia remains under allied administration until mid-1922.		
Ireland	Fifty one inf Bns in theatre. Brigadier General Holmes killed in ambush in Kerry.	Upton Train Ambush.	Brigadier General Cummings, killed in ambush in Kerry by same IRA team. The Crossbarry Ambush.		100 armoured cars and lorries available for tasking.	Kilmeena Ambush, Co Mayo. Seven bandsman from the Hampshire Regiment killed by mine in Youghall, Co Cork. IRA occupy and burn the Customs House in Dublin.	Troop train attacked at Jonesborough, Co Armagh.			A ceasefire for noon, 11 July 1921 agreed.			30 people killed in 4 days of violence in Belfast. Troops sent into E Belfast.	Anglo-Irish Peace Treaty is signed, resulting in partition of the island.
Turkey and The Caucasus. Egypt and Palestine	First Battle of İnönü between Turkish and Greek forces. The battle lasts three days and ends with a victory for the Turkish troops.	City of Antep surrenders to French forces after 384 days of fighting.	In the south, French occupation troops are forced to evacuate Feke faced with the resistance and assaults of the Turkish Revolutionaries. 2ndBattle of İnönü between Turkish and Greek forces. Cairo conference, Churchill advised by Lawrence recognises Hussein as King of Hejaz, Faisal as King of Iraq and Abdullah as Emir of Transjordan		French occupation troops are forced to evacuate Karaisalı faced with the resistance and assaults of the Turkish Revolutionaries.	Riots in Alexandra; Arab riots in Palestine, Samuel halts Jewish immigration.	Occupation of the coal mining region of the western Black Sea coasts of Turkey comes to an end.			Mustafa Kemal Pasha is made CinC by vote of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Battle of Sakarya between Turkish and Greek forces, ends with a Turkish victory.		Signature of Accord of Ankara between France and Turkey, ending the Cilicia War and preparing the ground for the evacuation of French troops from the southern front.		The British troops evacuate Kilis, centre of British administration for three years.

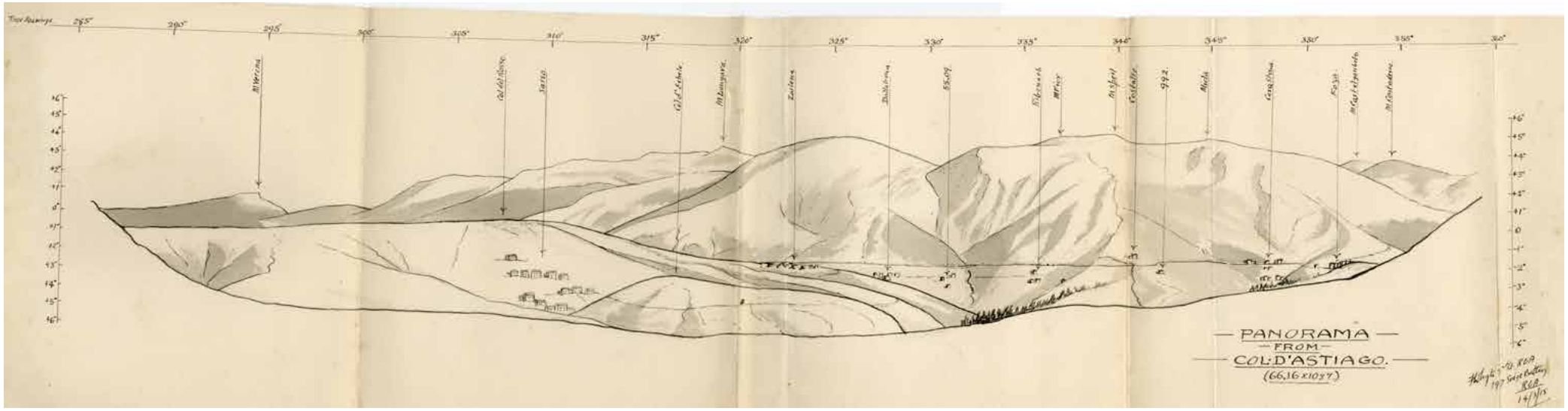
Timeline 1922

Front	January 1922	February 1922	March 1922	April 1922	May 1922	June 1922	July 1922	August 1922	September 1922	October 1922	November 1922	December 1922
Home	The British Empire now at its largest extent, covering a quarter of the world and ruling over one in five people on earth.	Washington Naval Treaty. Egypt granted Independence.				League of Nation awards Britain a mandate to control Palestine. Field Marshal Henry Wilson (formerly CIGS) assassinated by IRA in London.	Launch of the Austin 7.	Wilson's assassins hanged.		Turkish crisis precipitates Lloyd George's fall from office, Bonar Law forms govt. British Broadcasting Company formed.		The Parliament of Northern Ireland votes to remain part of the United Kingdom. The Irish Free State officially comes into existence.[1] George V becomes the Free State's monarch.
Western Europe including German Borderlands			Morland hands over command of BAOR to Godley. Five Irish Bns due for disbandment ordered to UK from Upper Silesia (replacement battalions being sent from UK).				Allied troops withdraw from Upper Silesia. British force level in Rhineland returns to normal (ie one cavalry regt, one bde RFA, one Fd Coy RE, eight inf bns and one tank coy).					
Ireland	The first regiment of the Irish National Army set up in Dublin.	IRA kidnapped 42 prominent loyalists and constables in counties Fermanagh and Tyrone.	IRA volunteers seized the RIC barracks in Belcoo, Co. Fermanagh. IRA volunteers in Fermanagh burned the homes and farms of ten local men from the Ulster Special Constabulary. Two were shot dead. 43 people killed in Belfast in March.	IRA massacre 13 Protestants in Dunmanway, Co Cork. 30 people killed in Belfast.	British troops leave the Curragh Camp. An IRA unit of 100 men occupy Pettigo on the Northern side of the border. A gun battle broke out between them and 100 Ulster Special Constables. A battalion of British troops and an artillery battery was deployed.	British troops re-take Pettigo, bombard the village with artillery and then storm it. RUC formed. Irish Civil War breaks out. 30 people killed in Belfast. King's birthday military review. Phoenix Park, 9,000 soldiers on parade. 28 June - National Army bombards the Four Courts in Dublin.	Violence in NI drops as civil war takes over in the South.	Dublin Castle handed over. 22 August - Michael Collins assassinated by Anti-treaty forces in Co Cork.				British troops hand over Royal (now Collins) Barracks in Dublin, and depart. Note RN and RGA continue to occupy the Treaty Ports of Lough Swilly, Berehaven and Queenstown (Cobh) until 1938. Sergeant O'Flynn RA who hauled down the Union Jack at Lough Swilly, and Sergeant McLaughlin, of the Eire force, who hoisted the tricolour, were brothers-in-law.
Turkey and The Caucasus, Egypt and Palestine		Egypt protectorate ends.	French and Italian troops withdraw from the neutral zones in Chanak, British forces reorganise to fill gap.	28 Div in Chanak area in response to Turkish moves.		Kingdom of Egypt established under Faud.	League approves British mandates.	British mandate proclaimed in Palestine, denounced by Arabs.	Chanak Crisis. Major Turkish counter-attack destroyed all the Greeks' gains in Asia Minor, evacuation of all Greek and Armenian troops and civilians, 250,000 people, from Smyrna - the Great Fire.	Stand-off between British and Turkish forces continues. Armistice of Mudanya resolves dispute.	Turkish Grand National Assembly abolished the sultanate and subsequently established a new republic with its capital in Ankara.	WO1 (RSM) GB Wilson RGA arrives in Chanak. Allied forces evacuated from Constantinople on 23 September 1923.
India, NW Frontier			Mahatma Gandhi is sentenced to six years in prison for sedition.									

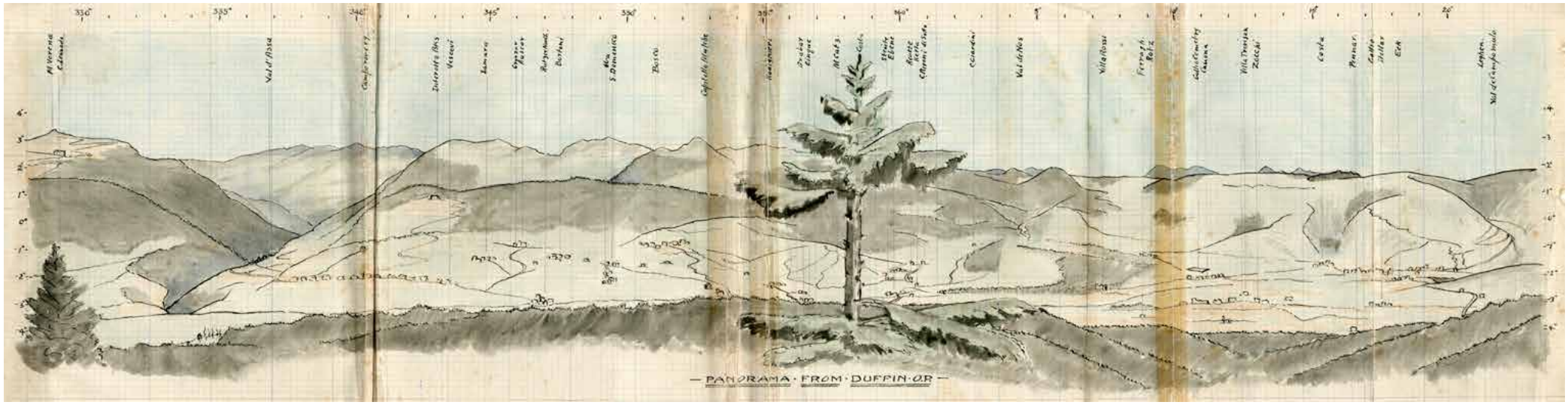
Appendix 4 - Map Index Sheet



Please note: This map is approximate, for indicative purposes only. This is derived from a modern map and not all boundaries are correct as 1914-18 or necessarily as in the aftermath of the war. Not to scale.



Panorama from Col D'Astiago, 197 Siege Battery RGA, Italy March 1918 (2/Lt Whyte RGA – papers of Major John Bailey SCOTS).



Panorama from Duffin OP (Asiago Plateau), Italy probably 1918 (2/Lt Whyte RGA – papers of Major John Bailey SCOTS).

The Sphinx (part of the Sari Bair Ridge) rising above the Canterbury Ceremonial Area, Gallipoli. ©Barbara Taylor

V Beach Sedd-el-Bahr, Gallipoli. ©Barbara Taylor

Green Hill Cemetery, Gallipoli. ©Barbara Taylor

Field Marshal Lord Rawlinson (NPG)

General 'Tim' Harington (NPG)

Frost bitten soldiers awaiting evacuation by lorry, Suvla Bay, Gallipoli November 1915 (IWM)

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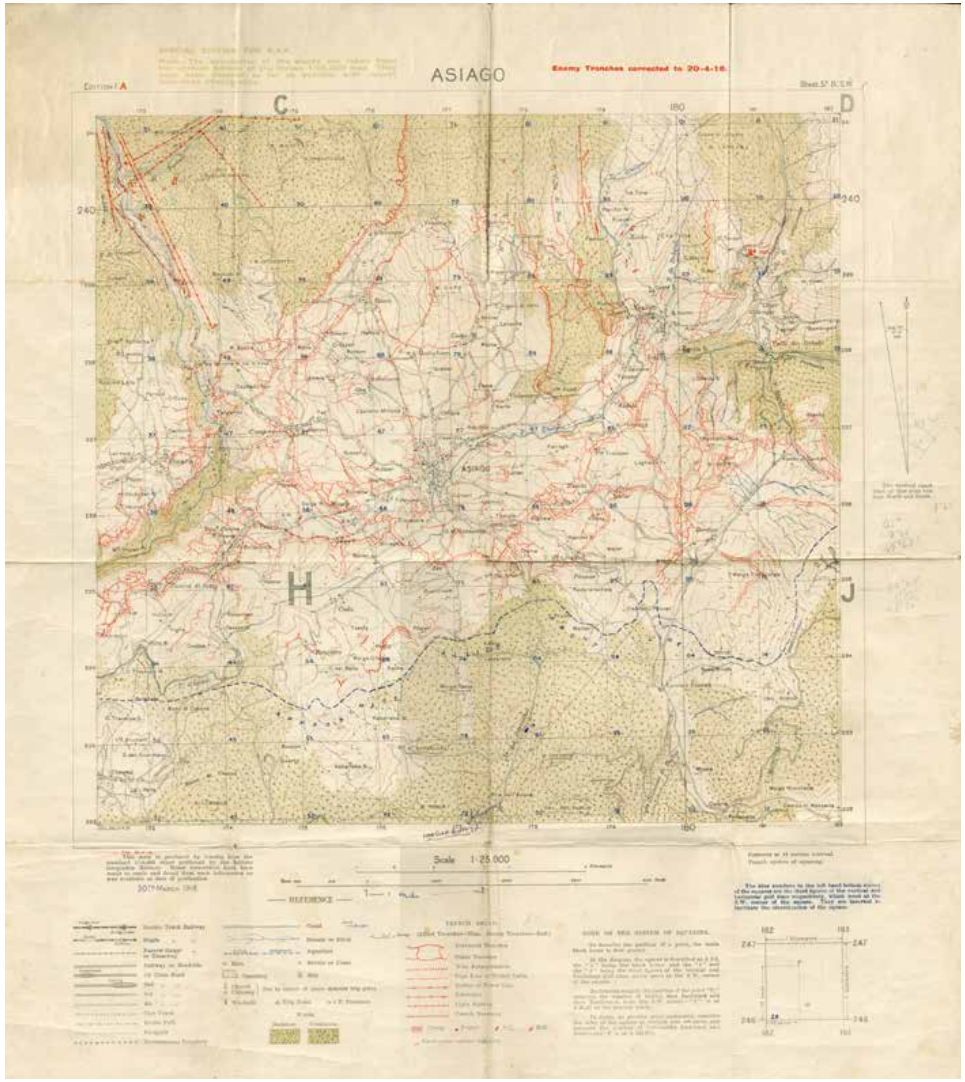
RAF Bi-Planes Flying Above Kirkuk, Kurdistan 1919, Sydney Carline (IWM).

Lake Doiran today, Macedonia, from the Doiran Military Cemetery. (John Wilson)

Horse on operating table, Mesopotamia, 1917 (IWM)



Map of Asiago, 1: 25,000, Italy, March 1918 (2/Lt Whyte RGA – papers of Major John Bailey SCOTS)

Notes

Members of the Land Warfare Centre visiting the Doiran Memorial whilst on a battlefield tour to Macedonia, 2015.
The DOIRAN MEMORIAL stands roughly in the centre of the line occupied for two years by the Allies in Macedonia, but close to the western end, which was held by Commonwealth forces. It marks the scene of the fierce fighting of 1917-1918. The memorial serves the dual purpose of Battle Memorial of the British Salonika Force (for which a large sum of money was subscribed by the officers and men of that force), and place of commemoration for more than 2,000 Commonwealth servicemen who died in Macedonia and whose graves are not known. The memorial was designed by Sir Robert Lorimer with sculpture by Walter Gilbert. It was unveiled by Sir George Macdonogh on 25 September 1926. The memorial stands near DOIRAN MILITARY CEMETERY, which now contains 1,338 Commonwealth burials of the First World War, 449 of them unidentified. There are also 45 Greek and one French war - text by CWGC. © John Wilson

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